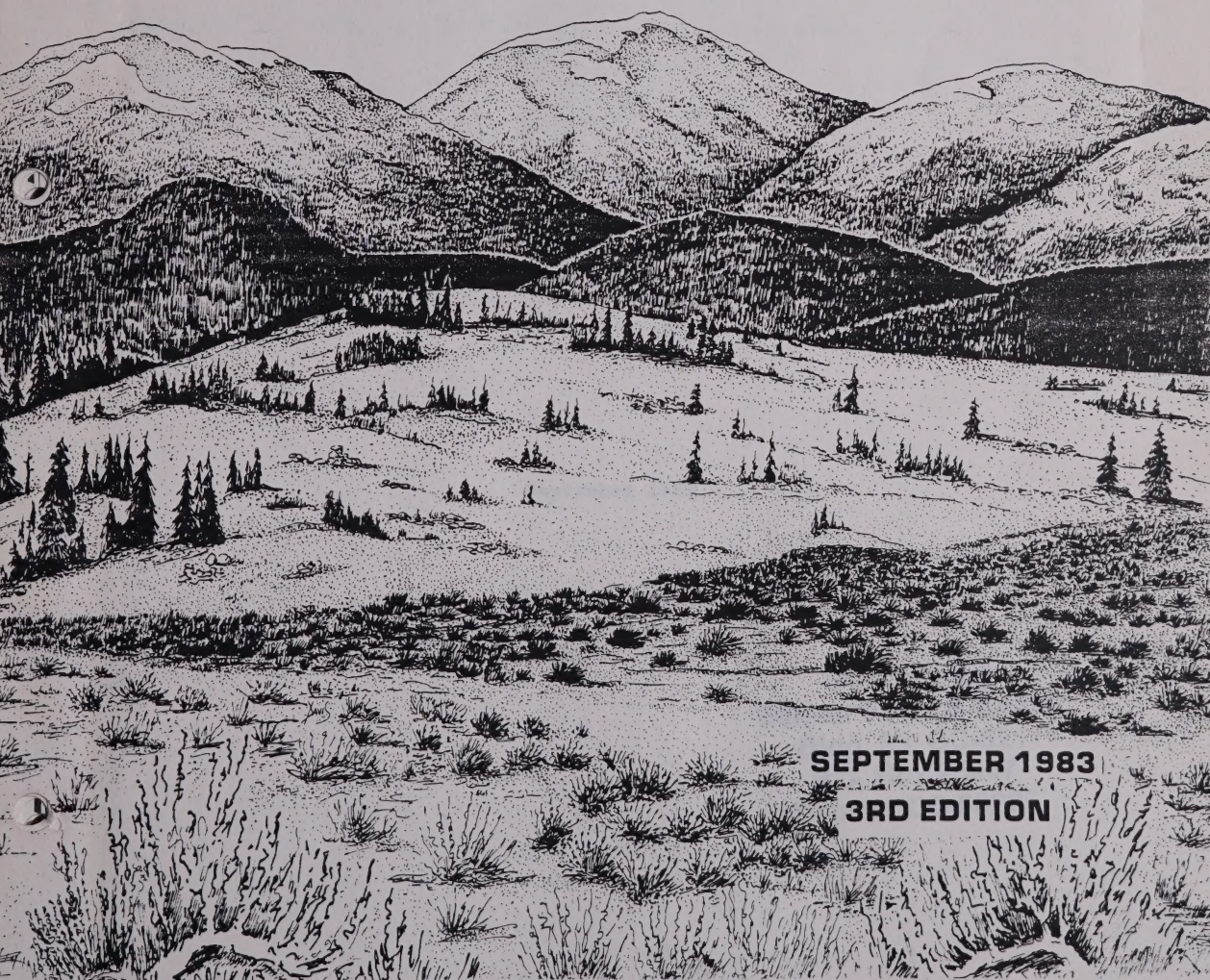
DILLON WILDNERNESS STUDY AREA, MONTANA

WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



SEPTEMBER 1983

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Dillon Resource Area, Montana

WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

September 1983

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RECOMMENDATION

This report contains the results of the Bureau of Land Management's review of eight areas in Beaverhead and Madison counties, Montana. Based on multiple resource analysis and public involvement, we have concluded that 67,417 acres within these areas are not suitable for preservation as wilderness. These nonsuitable areas are listed below and are shown on maps in this report.

TABLE 1

Area	Nonsuitable Acres (BLM)	Preliminary Suitable Acres (BLM)
Ruby Mountains (MT-076-001)	10,996	15,615
Blacktail Mountains (MT-076-002)	6,893	10,586
E. Fork of Blacktail Deer Cr. (MT-076-007)	6,230	0
Hidden Pasture Creek (MT-076-022)	15,509	0
Bell and Limekiln Canyons (MT-076-026)	9,650	0
Henneberry Ridge (MT-076-028)	9,806	0
Axolotl Lakes (MT-076-069)	7,804	0
Farlin Creek	0	610
Total	66,888	26,811

We are making no recommendations with respect to those lands preliminarily found suitable for preservation as wilderness, as those areas are now undergoing further consideration, involving mineral surveys being conducted by the Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines. Recommendations will be transmitted at a later date, when the mineral surveys have been completed.

This report contains the results of our analysis to date on both the nonsuitable tables and the preliminary suitable areas in order to give as complete a picture as possible of all the lands reviewed in this wilderness study.

This report satisfies the requirement for a Record of Decision under the regulations 43 CFR 1505. An environmental impact statement accompanies the report.

Michael J. Penfold — September 1, 1983

State Director, Bureau of Land Management — Date

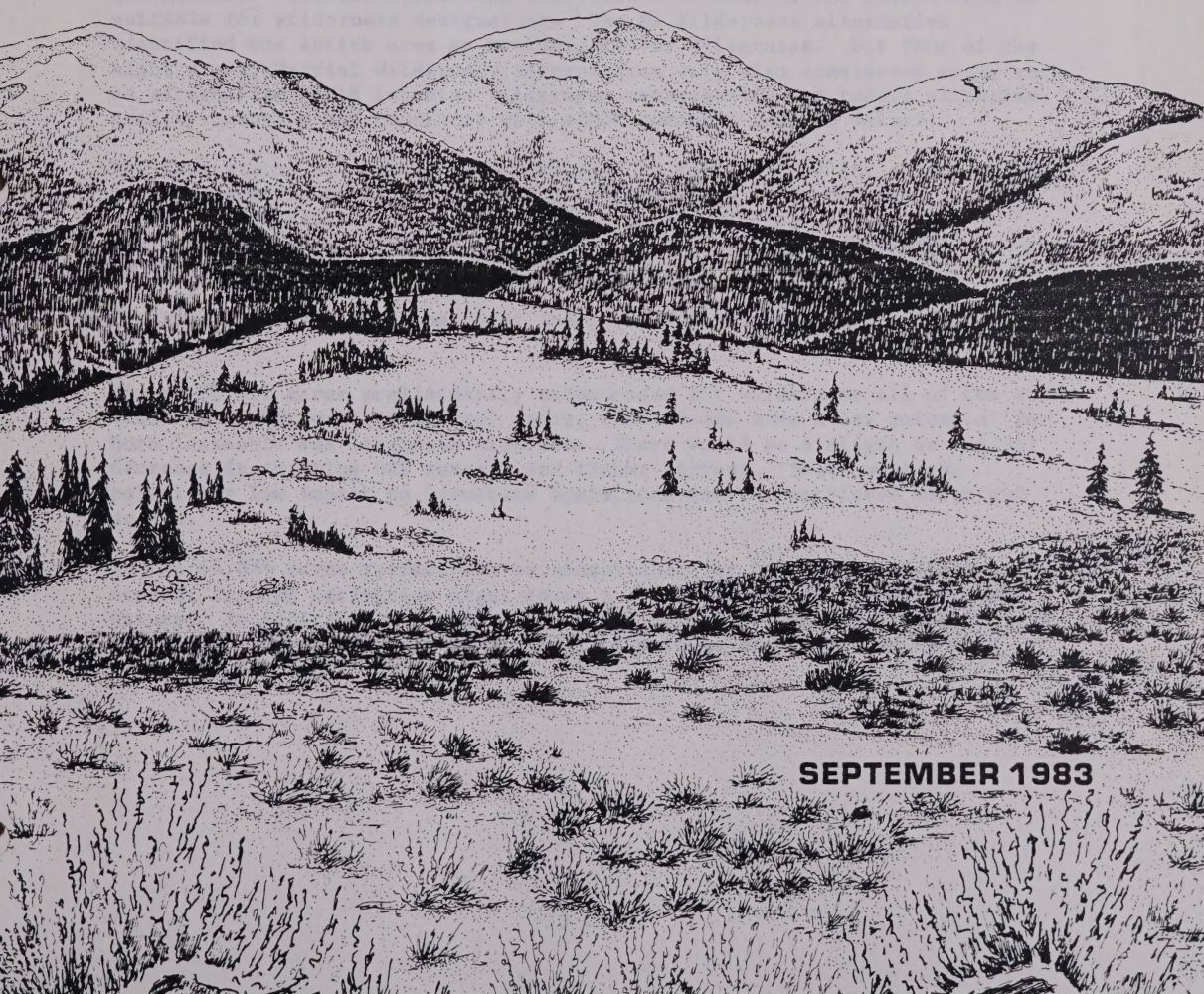
Director, Bureau of Land Management — Date

Secretary of the Interior — Date

WILDERNESS STUDY OVERVIEW

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



SEPTEMBER 1983

BACKGROUND AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wilderness Planning Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement for the Dillon Resource Area considers the suitability or nonsuitability of eight areas totalling 94,228 acres in Beaverhead and Madison counties in southwest Montana. The Dillon Resource Area is located in the Butte District and includes BLM-managed lands in Beaverhead, Madison, Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties. Seven of the areas are being studied under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA and one area, Farlin Creek, is being studied under authority of Section 202 of FLPMA.

The Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for this planning unit was completed in 1979. The wilderness resource recommendations were not considered because the wilderness inventory had not been completed. The Dillon MFP amendment is necessary to incorporate wilderness resource considerations and to develop recommendations on the areas being considered for wilderness.

Alternatives considered for each area were All Wilderness and No Wilderness (No Action). The All Wilderness alternative identified the entire area as suitable for wilderness designation. The No Wilderness alternative identified the entire area as nonsuitable for wilderness. For four of the eight areas, Partial Wilderness alternatives were also considered where such an alternative would increase wilderness manageability or reduce wilderness quality concerns and conflicts with other resource uses or values.

The land status of each area is displayed in Table 2, and the recommendations are displayed in Table 3. A total of 66,888 acres is recommended as not suitable for preservation as wilderness, while 26,811 acres are preliminarily identified as suitable, prior to the required mineral surveys by the Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines.

The cumulative adverse impacts of the preferred alternative are summarized as follows:

In the 26,811 acres preliminarily recommended for wilderness all of the acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry; these lands have a low potential for both leaseable and locatable minerals. There would be a slight or minimal decrease in existing ORV access, and timber harvest. There would be relatively low impact to livestock operations due to restricted motorized access.

In the 66,888 acres recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness, mining and mineral leasing activities might cause a slight impact to the wilderness values. In addition there could be slight impact to wilderness values from increased timber and range development as well as expanded road or ORV access.

TABLE 2

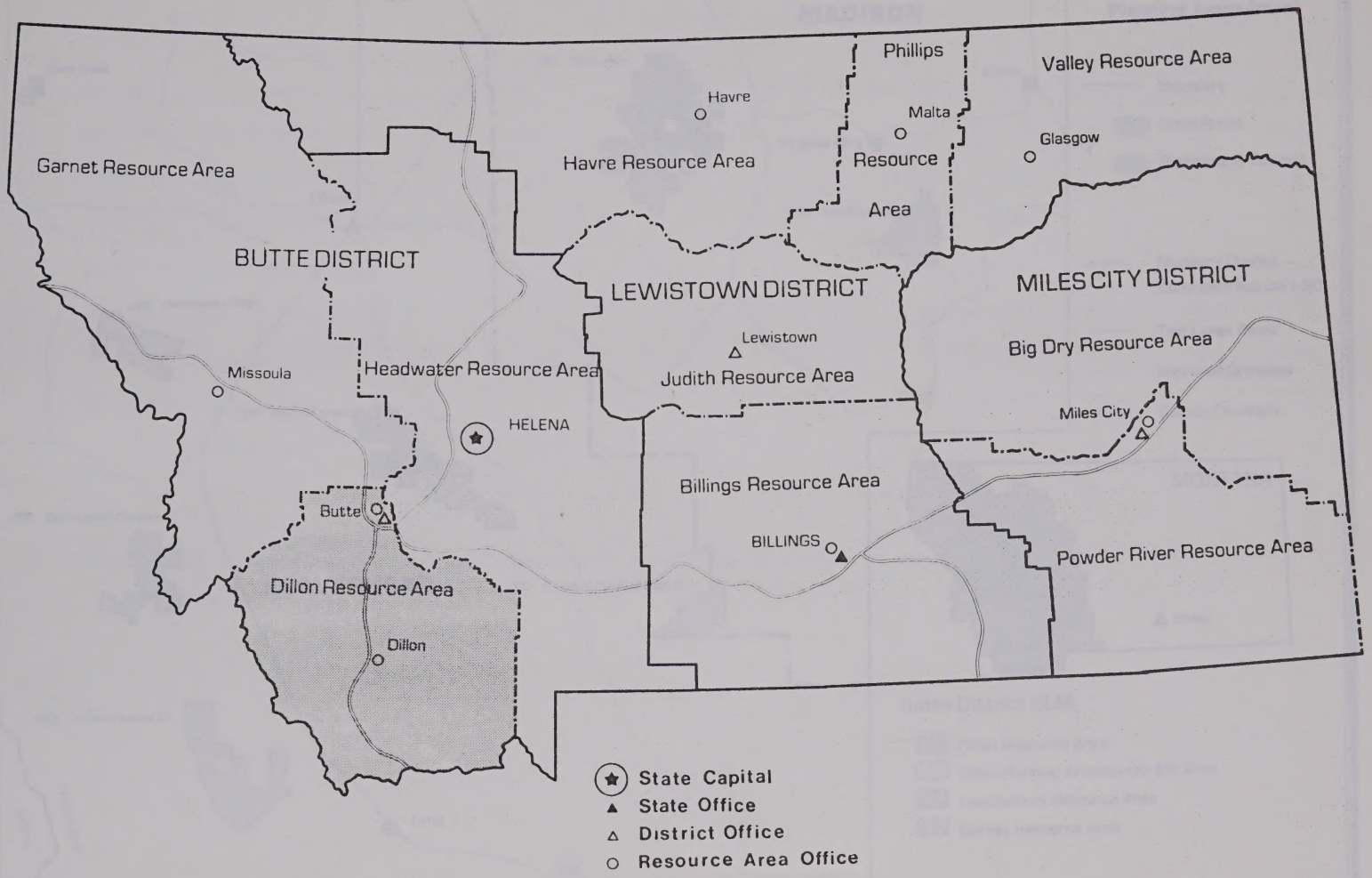
LANDS WITHIN AREA BOUNDARIES

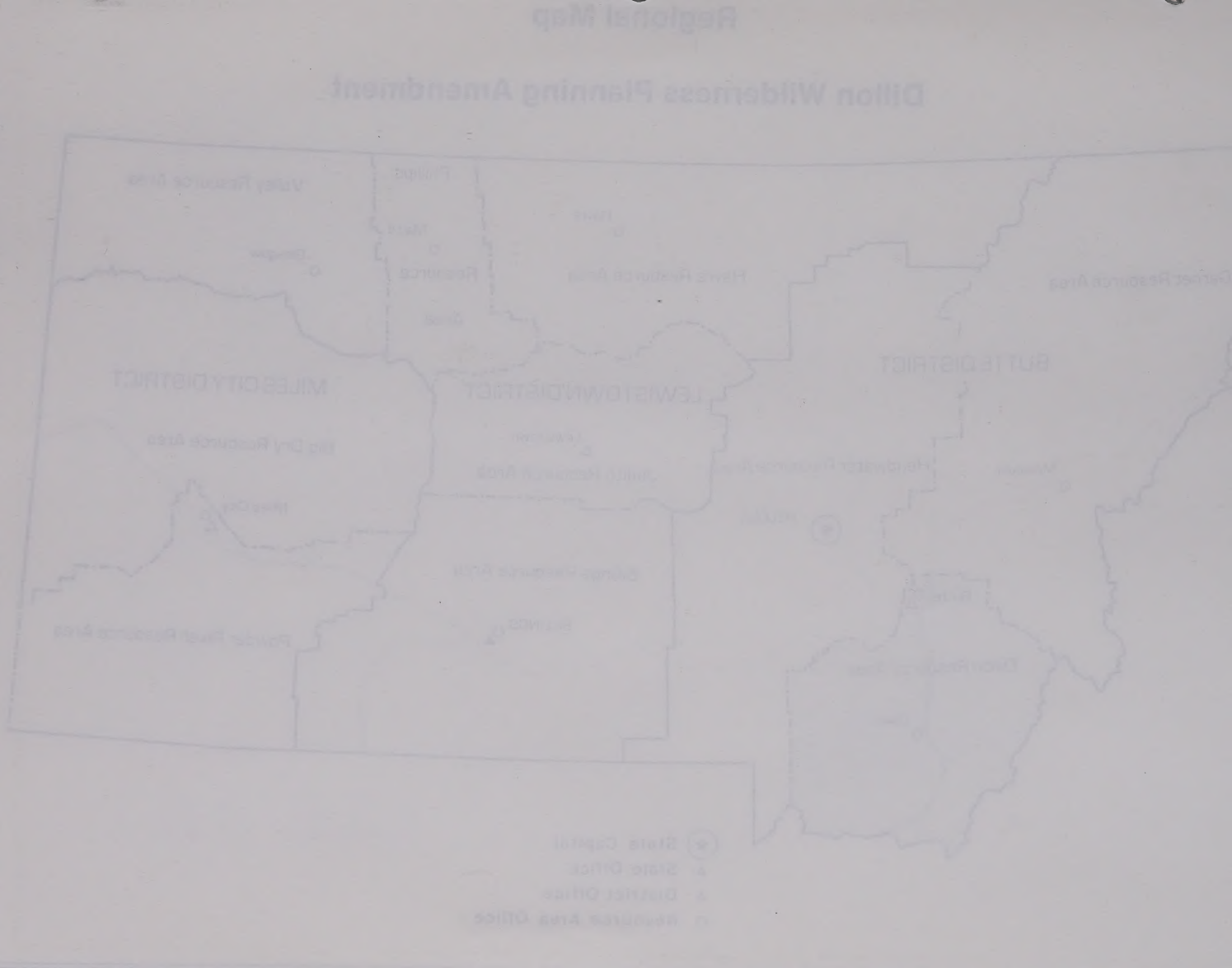
Number	Name	Acres BLM	Acres State	Acres Private	Gross Total
MT-076-001	Ruby Mountains	26,611	640	996	28,247
MT-076-002	Blacktail Mountains	17,479	0	0	17,479
MT-076-007	East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek	6,230	0	0	6,230
MT-076-022	Hidden Pasture Creek	15,509	640	0	16,149
MT-076-026	Bell and Limekiln Canyons	9,650	0	160	9,810
MT-076-028	Henneberry Ridge	9,806	0	0	9,806
MT-076-069	Axolotl Lakes	7,804	0	24	7,828
	Farlin Creek[1]	1,139	0	0	1,139

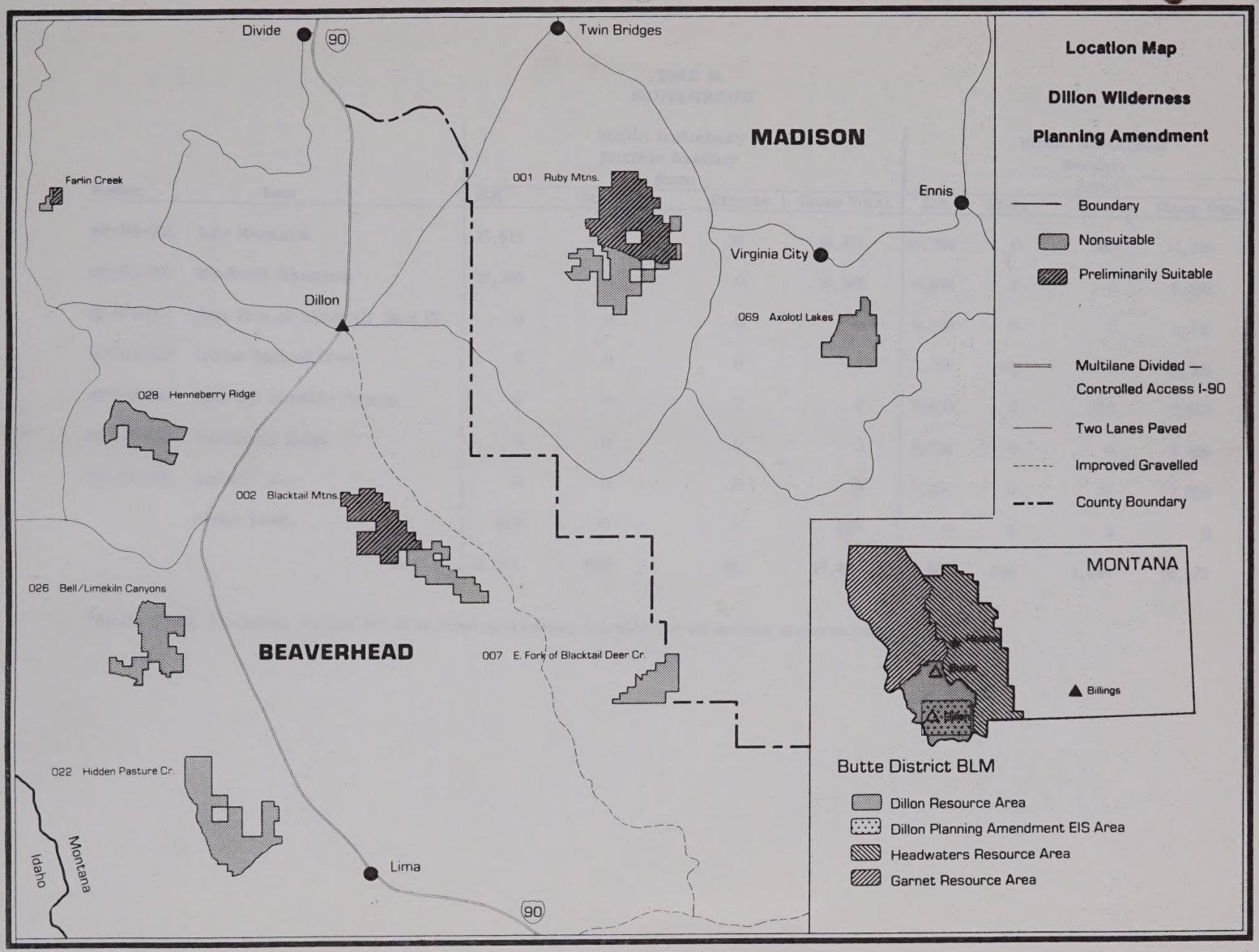
[1]Contiguous to Forest Service RARE II Area 1-008, recommended for wilderness. This area is being studied under authority of Section 202 of FLPMA.

Regional Map

Dillon Wilderness Planning Amendment






Location Map
Dillon Wilderness
Planning Amendment
Boundary
Nonsuitable
Preliminarily Suitable
Multilane Divided — Controlled Access I-90
Two Lanes Paved
Improved Gravelled
County Boundary
MONTANA
Billings
Butte District BLM
Dillon Resource Area
Dillon Planning Amendment EIS Area
Headwaters Resource Area
Garnet Resource Area
MADISON
BEAVERHEAD
Divide
Twin Bridges
Ennis
Virginia City
Dillon
Lima
Farlin Creek
001 Ruby Mtns.
069 Axolotl Lakes
028 Henneberry Ridge
002 Blacktail Mtns.
026 Bell/Limekiln Canyons
007 E. Fork of Blacktail Deer Cr.
022 Hidden Pasture Cr.
Idaho
Montana
90
90

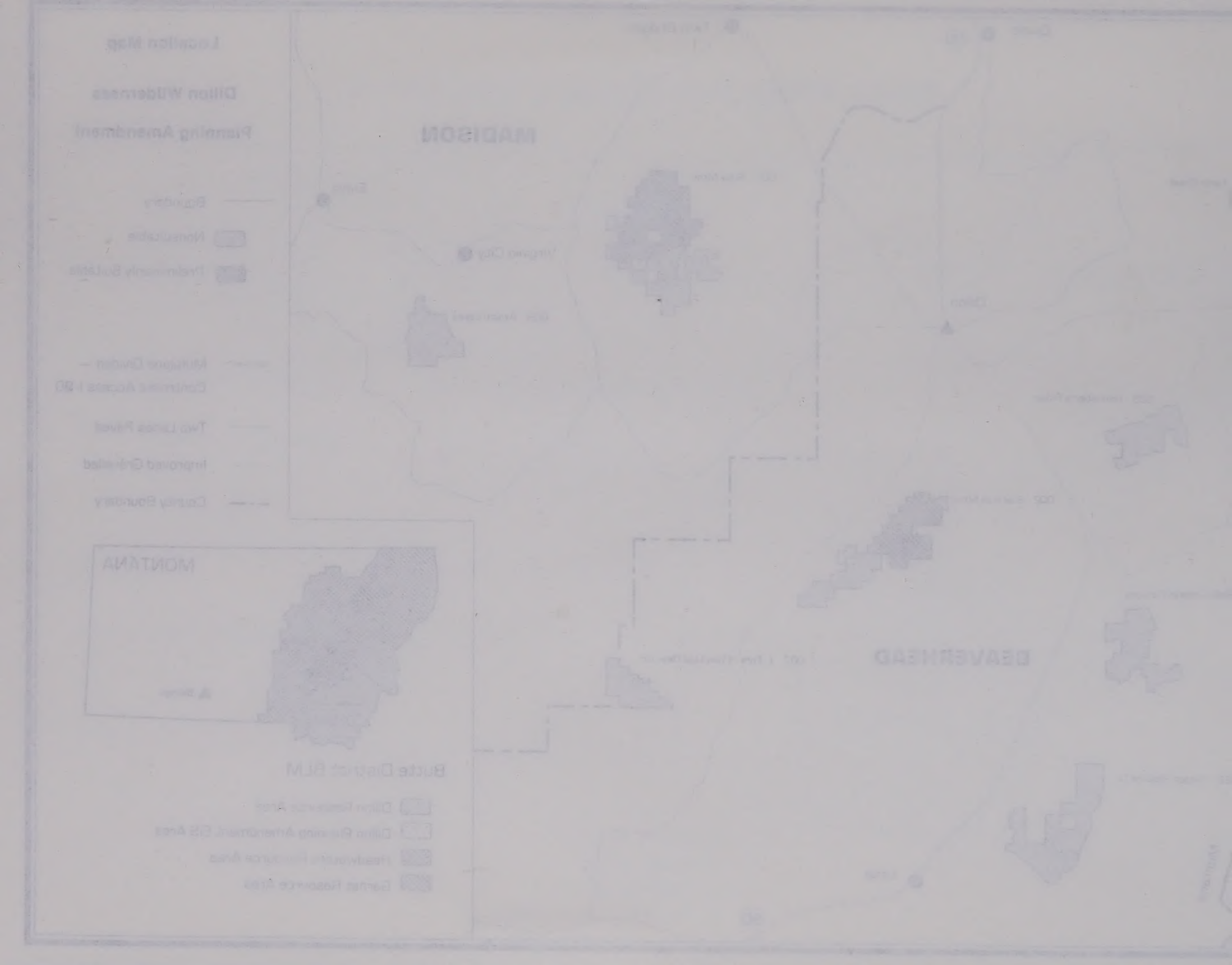

MADISON
BEAVERHEAD
MONTANA

TABLE 3A
RECOMMENDATIONS

Number	Name	Within Preliminary Suitable Boundary Acres				Within Nonsuitable Boundary Acres			
		BLM	State	Private	Gross Total	BLM	State	Private	Gross Total
MT-076-001	Ruby Mountains	15,615	640	36	16,291	10,996	0	960	11,956
MT-076-002	Blacktail Mountains	10,586	0	0	10,586	6,893	0	0	6,893
MT-076-007	East Fork of Blacktail Deer Cr.	0	0	0	0	6,230	0	0	6,230
MT-076-022	Hidden Pasture Creek	0	0	0	0	15,509	640	0	15,509
MT-076-026	Bell and Limekiln Canyons	0	0	0	0	9,650	0	160	9,810
MT-076-028	Henneberry Ridge	0	0	0	0	9,806	0	0	9,806
MT-076-069	Axolotl Lakes	0	0	0	0	7,804	0	24	7,828
	Farlin Creek	610[1]	0	0	610	0	0	0	0
	Totals	26,811	640	36	27,487	66,888	640	1,144	68,672

[1]Farlin Creek; 610 acres, Section 202 Area found preliminary suitable for wilderness preservation.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN

Public hearings on the draft proposal were held in Montana at Dillon and Helena on June 22 and June 24, 1982, respectively. The hearings were announced in local news releases and the Federal Register on May 5, 1983. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks wilderness proposals. Twenty individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study, and sixty-five written communications were received for the record.

A public comment period on the draft wilderness planning amemdment ran from May 17, 1982 to July 26, 1982 and a total of eight-five communications, either oral or in writing, were received. Due to multiple responses by some individuals, the actual number of respondents was seventy-four. Of these, eight supported the preferred alternative, eighteen favored alternatives of more or all wilderness, and thirty-five supported less or no wilderness. Three comments supported wilderness in general, three favored nonwilderness in general, and seven expressed no clear opinion.

Those favoring the preferred alternative believed that the proposal was reasonable in that the areas of highest wilderness quality, with few resource conflicts, were being proposed as wilderness.

Those supporting a larger wilderness proposal believed that wilderness would protect important wildlife habitat not included in the BLM wilderness proposal; that too little land was still under consideration for wilderness; that there is a need for more wilderness diversity, including grassland types; and that the study placed too much negative emphasis on manageability, configuration of the study areas, and conflicts with motorized recreation, grazing, and mineral development.

Those favoring less wilderness believed that there is too much designated wilderness; that the areas under consideration are not outstanding; that the areas are too small and cannot be managed as wilderness; and that there are significant conflicts with grazing uses, timber harvest, and development of areas of mineral potential. Several respondents expressed the belief that grazing and wilderness are not compatible.

Other points made by several respondents were that legal public access is needed to these BLM areas; that alternative forms of protection such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern should be considered; that areas of less than 5,000 acres should not be studied; and that three of the study areas--East Fork, Hidden Pasture and Bell-Limekiln--need to be studied in conjunction with adjacent national forest lands.

Of the areas recommended for wilderness, the Blacktail Mountains received the most comments in opposition, as well as the largest number of total comments. Of areas recommended for nonwilderness, the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek received the most comments in favor of wilderness designation.

New alternatives were proposed for the Ruby Mountains, Blacktail Mountains, East Fork, Hidden Pasture Creek, and Axolotl Lakes study areas.

Public comments resulted in a 400-acre reduction in the wilderness proposal for the Blacktail Mountains.

Public comments on specific WSAs or 202 study areas will be summarized in the following sections of this report entitled Summary Analysis of WSA's and 202 Study Area Recommendations.

INVENTORY COMMENTS DEFERED FOR CONSIDERATION UNTIL THE WILDERNESS STUDY

Comments received during the inventory phase that related to the study phase were carried forward and are discussed by individual WSAs in their respective sections.

TABLE 3B

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	No position
No. of Comments	85*	18	11	35	10
Percent of Total	--	24%	15%	47%	14%

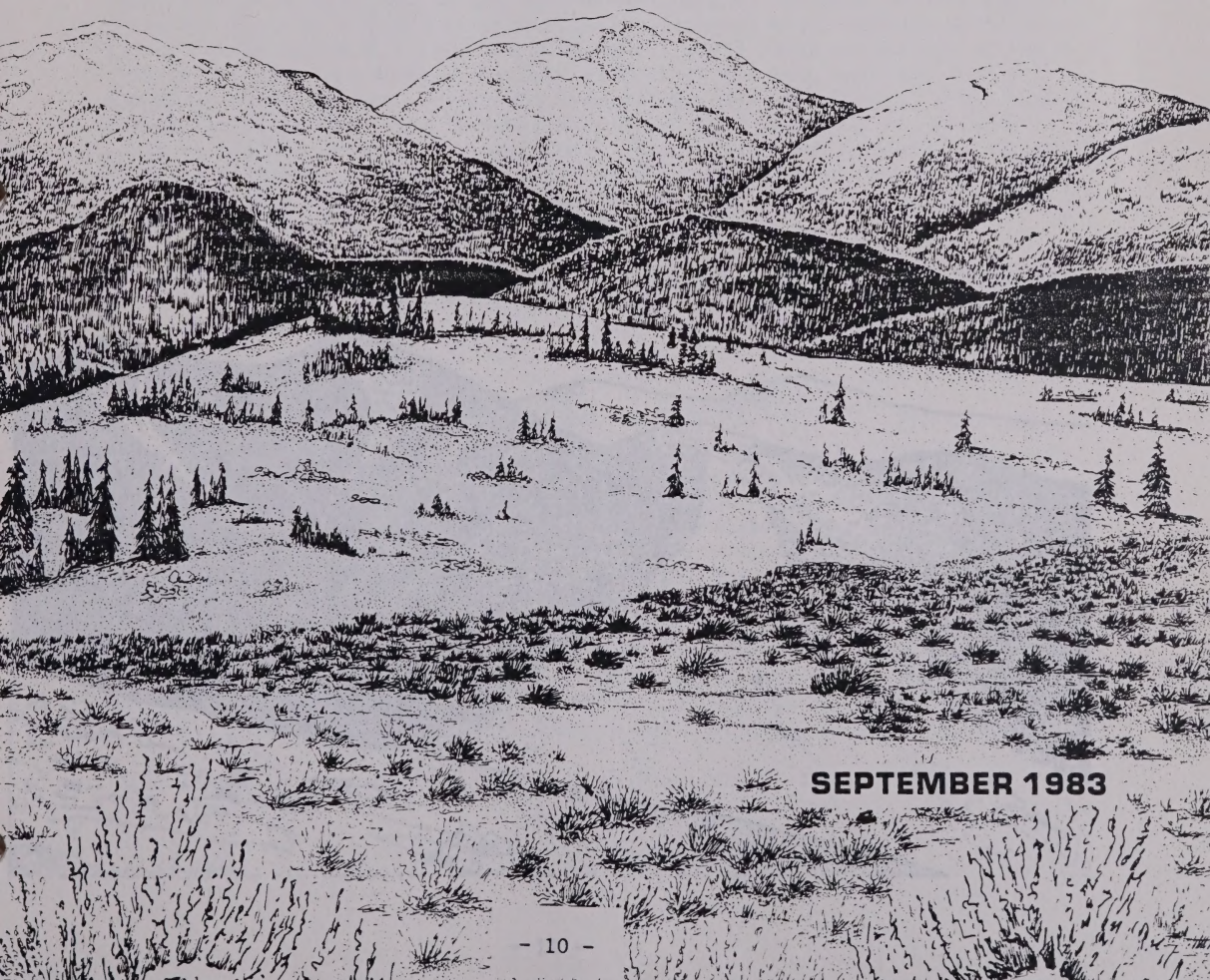
*This number is larger than the actual number of seventy-four respondents due to the multiple responses of some individuals.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF WSA'S AND 202 STUDY AREAS

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



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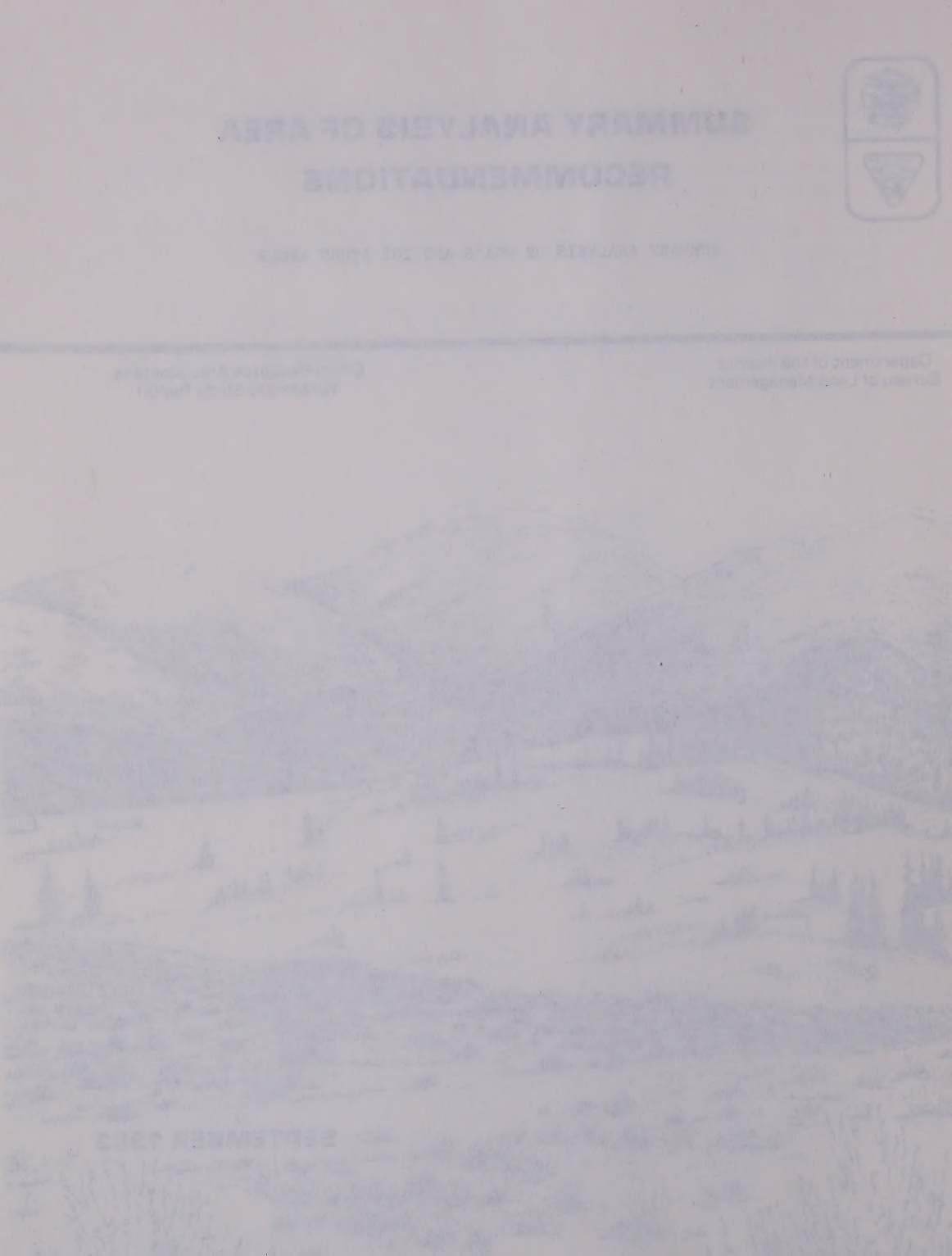
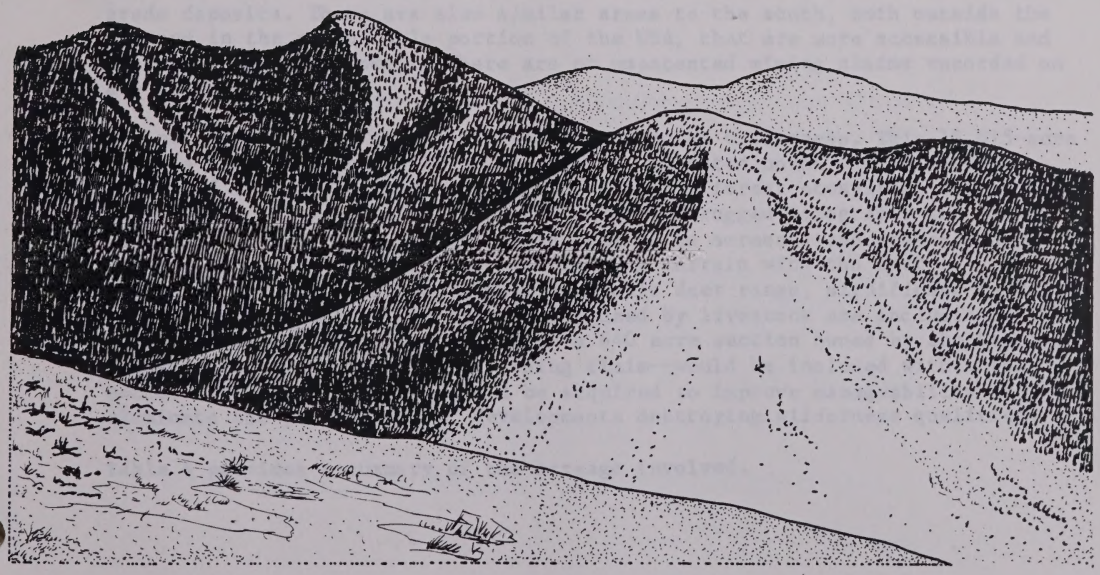


Ruby Mountains WSA
MT-076-001

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



RUBY MOUNTAINS, MT-076-001

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Ruby Mountains WSA contains 26,611 acres. There are about 996 acres of private land and one state inholding of 640 acres within the WSA boundary. The 26,611 acres are being studied for wilderness preservation under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

A total of 15,615 acres is recommended as preliminary suitable for wilderness designation, and 10,996 acres are recommended as not suitable. This proposal recommends wilderness protection for the area with the highest wilderness quality (naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation) and minimizes both conflicts with other resources and manageability problems.

Potential manageability concerns from livestock grazing operations would be reduced because about 80% of the area recommended as suitable is unleased for livestock grazing. Conflicts with timber harvesting would be reduced because all of the timber with a positive present net worth would be outside of the area recommended as suitable. Ninety percent of the area suitable for motorized recreation is outside the area recommended as suitable, which would reduce conflicts with this resource use. Potential manageability problems would be reduced because two inholdings, totaling 960 acres, would be outside the area recommended as suitable. At the same time however, about 80% of the elk range would be in the area recommended as nonsuitable and the ecosystem diversity of the area would be substantially reduced.

One area within the preliminary suitable portion contains geologic structures associated with talc occurrence, but there are no known occurrences of ore grade deposits. There are also similar areas to the south, both outside the WSA and in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, that are more accessible and available for development. There are no unpatented mining claims recorded on any of these areas.

The northern portion of the WSA is manageable as wilderness. This 15,615-acre area is comprised primarily of the rugged, forested north end of the Ruby range and consists primarily of the Douglas-fir forest ecosystem, with a limber pine subsystem of interest. Due to the rugged topography and relative isolation of the canyons, activities tend to be screened and cross-country vehicle travel barred. The most challenging terrain with the best opportunities for solitude, significant mule deer range, significant cultural resources, and over 12,000 acres not grazed by livestock are included in the proposed wilderness. Two inholdings--a 640 acre section owned by the State of Montana and a 36 acre patented mining claim--would be included within the boundaries. These parcels should be acquired to improve manageability and eliminate the possibility of developments destroying wilderness qualities.

Table 4 provides a summary of the acreage involved.

TABLE 4

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR RUBY MOUNTAINS WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Ruby Mountains WSA (MT-076-001)	26,611
Also within WSA boundary:	
State 640 acres	
Private 996	
Gross Total 28,247	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	10,996
Also within nonsuitable boundary:	
Private 960 acres	
Gross Total 11,956	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	15,615
Also within preliminarily suitable boundary:	
State 640 acres	
Private 36	
Gross Total 16,291	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Ruby Mountains WSA is fifteen miles east of Dillon and two miles west of Alder, Montana.

Boundaries

The WSA is bordered primarily by state, private, and other BLM lands not included in the WSA. The WSA is roughly rectangular on a southwest-northeast axis. Its width narrows to one and one-half miles in the south central portion (See the Ruby Mountains WSA map).

General Environment

The Ruby Mountains WSA consists of steep, mountainous topography, with streams radiating outward from a central ridge. Vegetation consists primarily of Douglas-fir, limber pine, lodgepole pine, and Engelmann spruce.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Areas Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The Ruby Mountain WSA is predominantly natural in character. The dominant topographic feature is the main Ruby Range Ridgeline, which extends north to south and forms the backbone of the Ruby Mountains. The northern end of the range is drained by approximately twenty major and minor canyons. There are a few springs, but otherwise no water flows through these canyons except during snowmelt.

The southern end of the WSA, in the Garden Creek-Hinch Creek area, is well dissected but less precipitous than the northern section. Aspen and streamside meadows are common. Garden and Hinch Creek are small spring-fed streams. Exposed, open ridges, timbered bottoms, and slopes protected from the elements are characteristic of this southern area.

About 80% of the WSA is forested; the greatest concentration of forested terrain is in the northern half. Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, limber pine, and Engelmann spruce are the predominant species. Rock outcrops, talus, and open grassland are found in the 20% that is not forested.

Naturalness of the WSA is marred only by the stock driveway extending from the south-central part of the WSA to the western boundary. Much of the driveway has been constructed with substantial cuts and fills. The part of the driveway near Big Dry Creek is in timber; therefore, it is less noticeable than the parts along open slopes south of Ruby Peak. Rehabilitation of the driveway would be possible over a relatively long period of time if its use were modified or discontinued. Among other relatively minor imprints are four and one-half miles of fence and seventeen and one-half miles of vehicle ways in this relatively large WSA.

A number of these imprints--all of the fencing, six miles of vehicle ways, about one and one-half miles of the stock driveway, one partially logged area, and the line shack and corral--are in the south central part of the WSA roughly between Garden Creek and Hinch Creek (in the area recommended as nonsuitable). Most of the other human imprints are dead-end, lightly used vehicle ways that extend short distances up some of the canyons.

Most of the north end of the WSA (roughly 12,640 acres) is not used for livestock grazing; therefore, the natural composition of vegetation is not affected.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Excellent vegetative screening and topographic diversity contribute to outstanding opportunities for solitude, and outstanding recreation opportunities are available.

The size, diversity, and challenging terrain of the WSA afford excellent opportunities for both daytime use and backpacking trips of several days' duration among the canyons, peaks, and other points of interest.

Solitude. The well-dissected topography and forest cover contribute to outstanding opportunities for solitude. Only in the southern portion, where the unit has a narrow and irregular configuration, are these opportunities somewhat restricted.

Elevations vary from about 5,320 feet on the prairie at the east edge of the unit to 9,391 feet on Ruby Peak. The elevation of more than half the WSA is above 8,000 feet.

There are distant views of the Ruby and Beaverhead valleys from the higher peaks and some of the open ridgelines. These views of ranches, highways, and small towns have an insignificant effect on solitude. From the Mormon Peak ridge at the extreme south end of the WSA, south of Garden Creek, sounds of the nearby Treasure Talc Mine are occasionally evident. The external influence of the mine is not significant north of this ridge.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The opportunities for diverse types of primitive recreation are excellent. Visitors can hike, backpack, or ride horseback in spring, summer, and fall. The opportunities are excellent for winter recreation, including hiking in the lower elevations and skiing and snowshoeing in the high country.

The unit's diverse terrain provides opportunities for scenic back country travel. The southern and central parts of the unit provide the best terrain for horseback riding. Challenging hiking is the only possible mode of travel in the rugged terrain of the forested northern part of the unit.

Opportunities for hunting mule deer and secondarily, elk, are outstanding, and big game hunting is the primary recreation use at this time.

Special Features

A number of geologic and associated scenic features are present in the Ruby Mountains WSA. Free-standing rock walls, caves, and cliff faces add to scenic interest. The complex geology of the Ruby Range is a supplemental feature of interest.

As many as thirteen different mountain ranges can be seen from high peaks and ridges in the unit. The scenic quality and variety of the WSA is high, with steep canyons, cliffs, timbered slopes, ridgetop parks, and sagebrush-grassland slopes and meadows.

Cultural resource values are considered significant. Occupation sites, ceremonial sites, and hunting blinds have been recorded.

The diverse habitats of the WSA provide yearlong or spring-summer-fall habitat for a variety of wildlife, including elk and mule deer. The area provides calving habitat for elk. Habitat for mule deer is considered superior. A total of 12,640 acres within the WSA is designated in the

current land use plan as wildlife habitat where no domestic livestock grazing is permitted.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would enhance protection of several important resource values. Additional protection of security cover and wildlife use patterns would be ensured for crucial deer and elk habitats. Restricted vehicle use would also reduce stress for these species and enhance security needs. Designation would preclude any land management activities with a significant potential to disturb the watershed cover and would ensure that outstanding scenic values would be preserved. More restrictive standards would be required for future BLM projects to ensure that they blend into the natural landscape. Designation would provide maximum protection for existing cultural resource values. There would be a slight beneficial effect on primitive recreation by curtailing most of the minor existing motor vehicle use in the area. Wilderness designation would ensure that the existing outstanding scenic values in the WSA would be preserved.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Landforms. Sagebrush steppe, Douglas-fir forest, and foothills prairie ecosystems are represented in the Ruby Mountains WSA.

There are examples of the sagebrush steppe type in three units in the wilderness system, and numerous opportunities other than those in this study for preservation of additional examples of this ecotype--primarily in relatively large BLM study areas in northern Nevada, eastern Oregon, southern Wyoming, and southern Idaho, totalling over four million acres.

The Douglas-fir forest ecosystem is represented in eight designated wilderness areas in Montana alone. The foothills prairie ecotype is currently included in only one designated wilderness. Nine other proposed and further study areas, however, contain this ecosystem, and one area recommended for wilderness in this study, the Blacktail Mountains, contains a representative area of this type.

Therefore, ecosystem representation is not a major factor affecting the suitability of this WSA. However, the unit does contain a subtype of interest within the Douglas-fir ecosystem--a ridgetop limber pine and park association.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The Ruby

Mountains WSA is within five hours driving time of two major population centers--Billings and Great Falls. However, the designation of the Ruby Mountains would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within a days driving time of these two cities because they are near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. Within five hours of Billings there are five designated wilderness areas totaling 2,007,274 acres, twenty-seven presidentially endorsed areas totaling 1,449,062 acres, and forty further study areas totaling 1,024,627 acres. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this WSA would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region and would expand somewhat the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8%, and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of the Ruby Mountains WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

Management of the entire WSA for wilderness purposes is not feasible, because of the irregular boundaries, particularly in the southwestern portion of the area. This southwestern portion is extremely narrow and irregular and is essentially isolated from the rest of the area by private land along McHessor Creek. The extreme southern end of the WSA is also impacted by sounds from the offsite talc mine. The preferred alternative, however, eliminates those portions of the WSA that are not manageable as wilderness and leaves a consolidated block of land that is manageable as wilderness over the long term (See Ruby Mountains map). The preferred alternative also provides a more identifiable southern boundary (a ridgetop, except in Section 21, in order to include all of Ruby Peak) and eliminates two of the four inholdings. The two remaining inholdings are still a management consideration because of the possibility of future requests for developed access; however, this is not felt to be a major impact on the overall manageability of the area.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

If the entire WSA were designated as wilderness there would be no major impact on the availability for exploration of land with mineral potential. Potential exists for talc occurrence throughout the WSA but is not as high as the adjoining area to the south. If partial wilderness designation is made the same situation will exist as the All Wilderness alternative.

Approximately 10% of the WSA is underlain by precambrian marble units that have high potential for the occurrence of talc. Talc is currently mined at two locations south of the study area. There are several areas just south of the study area near the existing mines that contain the same geologic structures associated with talc occurrence and are more accessible for development if these mining operations were to require expansion. There are no mining claims recorded on any of these areas in the WSA.

The area has moderate potential for metamorphic minerals (iron, sillimanite, kyanite) and low potential for metallic minerals and oil and gas.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. There would be relatively minor adverse effects on motorized recreation opportunities, as most of the study area is unsuitable for motor vehicle use.

Wildlife. Restrictions on timber harvesting and prescribed burning would result in a lost potential for enhancement of forage production for mule deer.

Under current management the forage in the northern part of the unit is allocated to wildlife and not to livestock. Although wilderness designation would guarantee the continuation of this policy over the long term, it is unlikely that this policy would change even without wilderness designation because of the rugged, heavily forested nature of the area.

Livestock Grazing. There are six grazing allotments with a total of 838 AUMs within the WSA, four of which are small custodial allotments. About 13,557 acres within the WSA are not currently leased for grazing.

The 900-acre prescribed burn proposed for the Garden Creek Allotment would probably be prohibited under wilderness designation. The burn would yield about a 90-AUM increase in surveyed grazing capacity, although the primary purpose of the burn is to lessen impacts on riparian habitat by creating a better distribution of livestock. This

goal could be partially met through alternative management methods, but this would require relatively extensive fence construction and spring development. Some degree of flexibility in grazing management could be lost under wilderness designation of the southern part of the WSA.

There would be no other impacts to proposed improvements or stocking levels, and there would be relatively low to moderate additional costs to permittees.

In addition, there is a constructed stock driveway passing through part of the WSA. The current land use plan calls for an evaluation of the impacts of this feature, its use, and its possible relocation and rehabilitation. This same course of evaluation would take place under wilderness or nonwilderness.

Timber Management. The WSA contains approximately 17,500 acres of forestland. Only 2,271 acres (13%) of the harvestable timber is on land suitable for ground skidding. The ruggedness of this range is one reason it has remained undeveloped. The entire north end of the range is considered inoperable for economic and/or topographic reasons, particularly because of problems of regeneration and high road development costs.

Of four economic analysis units in the southern end of the range, one area in Garden Creek drainage may be economically feasible to harvest, with a present net worth of about $21,000. If the entire WSA becomes wilderness this harvest would be forgone.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

Under the No Wilderness alternative, the north end of the Ruby Range would likely retain its natural character, at least in the short term. Proposed recreation and forestry access and management actions would have the greatest effect in Garden Creek, in the southern end of the range. Exploration for talc in the central and southern parts of the area is a possibility in the future; impacts could be minimal to major, depending on the extent of the activity and the access route selected. Any proposed timber and mineral activity, however, would likely be allowed subject to interdisciplinary review. The land use plan decision concerning the stock driveway could improve the natural character of that part of the unit if the driveway were relocated and/or rehabilitated.

Under the preferred alternative (Partial Wilderness) wilderness values in the southern portion could be negatively impacted.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Under the All Wilderness alternative, benefits of any future mineral development and relatively small benefits of timber harvest in the southern end of the range would be forgone. There could be some social

and economic benefits related to long-term preservation of wildlife habitat, nonmotorized recreation opportunities, and scenic vistas.

Under the preferred alternative (Partial Wilderness) there would be insignificant social and economic effects.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Madison County Comprehensive Plan recognizes agriculture and tourism-recreation as the two mainstays of the Madison County economy. Positive factors influencing recreation's contribution are the proximity to Yellowstone Park, the blue ribbon status of area trout streams, and "an abundance of scenic natural areas." One of the areas listed as a scenic natural area is the Ruby Mountains. Mining is mentioned as a potentially positive factor for county employment as the economic feasibility of mineral extraction improves. No inconsistencies exist between the formal county plan and the preferred alternative, as the study has incorporated the relevant factors.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Three alternatives were considered for Ruby Mountains WSA--All Wilderness (26,611 acres wilderness), No Wilderness (No Action), and Partial Wilderness (15,615 acres wilderness and 10,996 acres nonwilderness). A new alternative was proposed by five respondents during the comment period on the draft. It would essentially include the Hinch Creek drainage at the south end of the range within the proposed wilderness, adding about 3,000 acres. This alternative was analyzed, and wilderness values were not considered sufficient in the added area to offset the cumulative effects of inholdings, impacts on naturalness, the possible loss of grazing management flexibility necessary to improve riparian habitat condition, and possible additional costs of grazing operations due to restrictions on motorized vehicles. Therefore this alternative was not considered further.

Table 5 is a summary of potential impacts for each alternative that was fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The Partial Wilderness alternative is the preferred alternative. All feasible means to avoid unnecessary environmental impacts have been adopted.

Monitoring and Enforcement

Table 5

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

RUBY MOUNTAINS

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (26,611 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for moderately large area containing four major ecosystems with Douglas-fir strongly dominant. High wilderness values exist in northern portion; values are somewhat modified in southern portion.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Four inholdings would exist, three adjacent to WSA boundary. Land exchanges possible.	Slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 17.5 miles of lightly traveled vehicle ways.	Anticipated slight potential for improvement in quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreational use.	Ensures long term preservation of outstanding scenic values.	Opportunities forgone to improve habitat and increase numbers of mule deer, the species of greatest significance. Ensures long-term protection of security cover for deer and elk.	No major impact on the availability for exploration of lands with high mineral potential. Potential exists for talc occurance throughout the WSA but is not as high as adjoining areas south of the WSA.	Opportunity forgone for prescribed burning to increase livestock grazing capacity. Little overall impact since about half of area is unleased.	Short-term and long-term loss of 1 mmbf harvest potential/decade, with a marginal current economic return.	Slight reduction in opportunity for creation of jobs in mining. Reduction of jobs associated with harvest of 1 mmbf of commercial timber. Slight increase in local income from nonmotorized recreation.
NO WILDERNESS	North end of range could retain natural character. Southern portion wilderness values could be impaired by minerals, timber, road construction activity.	No impact.	No Impact	No change in northern portion, moderately negative effect on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation in southern portion.	Potential short-term degradation of outstanding values in southern portion; continued protection of outstanding values in northern portion in the short term.	Opportunities to improve mule deer habitat are retained; high potential for increase in mule deer populations. Potential for minor adverse impact on elk habitat; minor effect on elk numbers.	No impact on mineral exploration or development.	No impacts.	No impacts.	Possible economic benefits from mining and timber.
PARTIAL WILDERNESS (15,615 acres)(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Same as All Wilderness except less ecosystem diversity and portion with modified naturalness removed.	Minor potential for future manageability problems. Two inholdings would exist. Land exchanges possible.	Very slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 4.5 miles of infrequently traveled vehicle ways.	Anticipated very slight potential for improvement in quantity and quality in northern portion moderate negative effects on nonmotorized recreational use in southern portion.	Ensures long-term preservation in northern portion; moderate potential for degradation in southern portion.	Opportunities to improve some mule deer habitat are retained, along with potential for moderate increases in deer populations. Adequate security cover maintained for elk and deer.	No major impact on the availability of lands with high mineral potential. The Ruby Peak area remains within the acreage recommended for wilderness. Ruby Peak area has potential for talc occurance but not as high as adjoining areas south of the WSA.	Minor adverse impacts, about 80% of area is unleased. About 90% of the proposed prescribed burn could take place.	No impacts.	Slight reduction in opportunity for creation of mining jobs in the partial wilderness. Slight increase in local income from nonmotorized recreation.

If part of the area is designated wilderness as proposed, a Wilderness Management Plan will be prepared to protect natural values. If part of the area is released from wilderness consideration as proposed, existing regulations and policies will guide management of this area to ensure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved the effects of wilderness designation on timber, mining, and grazing uses and the use of private inholdings.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments were received on the Dillon MFP that related to the Ruby Mountains WSA.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana at Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Thirty-four communications were submitted on the Ruby Mountains WSA. Ten comments supported the BLM proposal for partial wilderness. Fourteen favored no wilderness, while four favored all wilderness for the study area. Five respondents proposed new alternatives with a larger proposed wilderness. One of those who favored nonwilderness indicated that a boundary could be drawn to eliminate his objections. One respondent expressed no clear opinion.

Most of those supporting the proposal believed that the area with highest wilderness quality and few resource conflicts had been proposed for designation. Those supporting all or more wilderness believed the area's diversity could be enhanced, that resource conflicts were minimal, and that important wildlife habitat should be included.

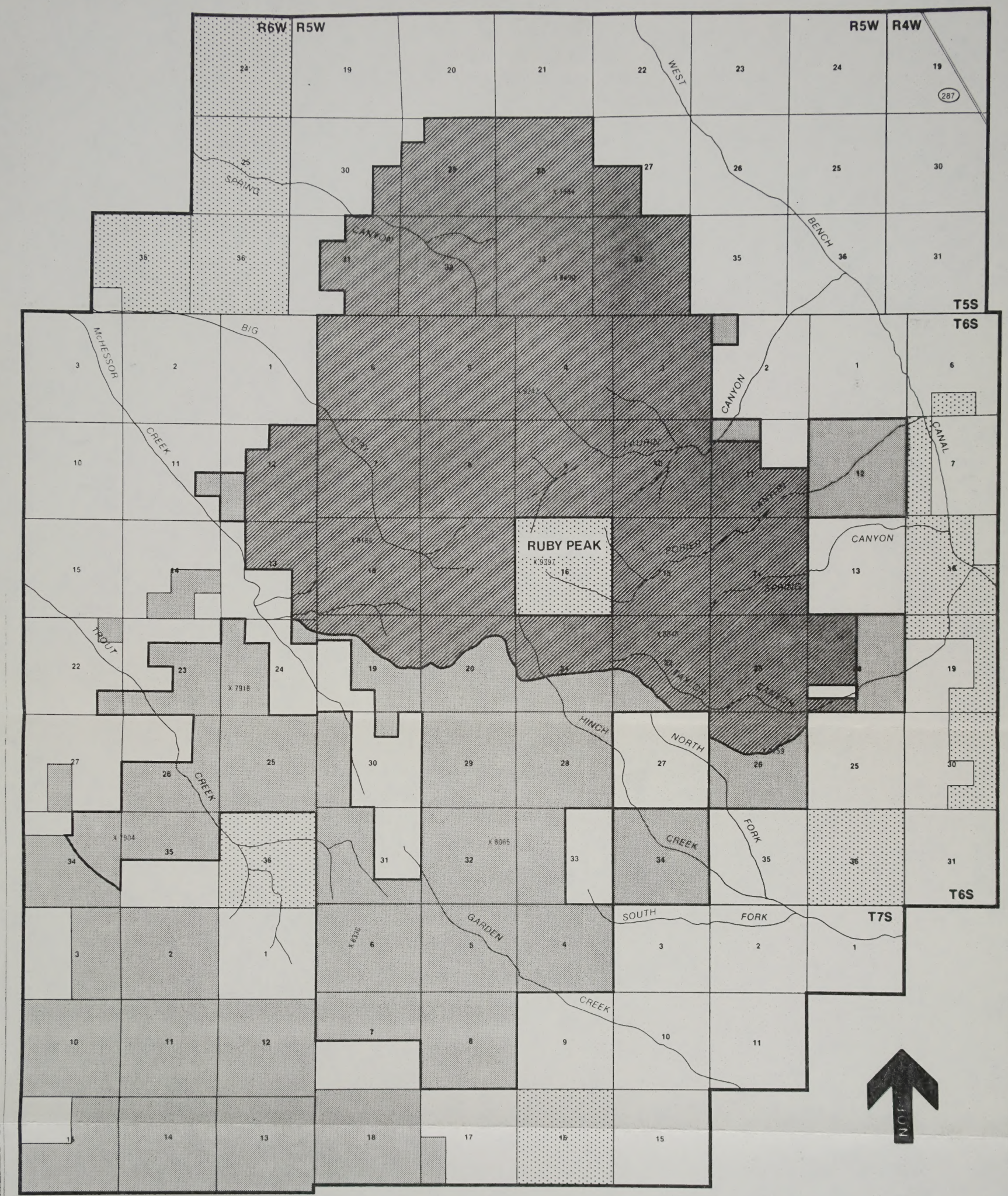
Those favoring nonwilderness cited minerals, timber, and grazing conflicts, as well as problems with inholdings and limited wilderness quality.

A total of thirty-four comments were received on Ruby Mountains WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	34	9	10	0	14	1

Comments Received from State and Local Governments or other Government Agencies

No comments were received from state or local governments or other government agencies that related specifically to the Ruby Mountains WSA.



RUBY MOUNTAINS WSA
MT-076-001

WSA Boundary

WSA — Non-suitable

State

BLM

WSA — Preliminarily Suitable

Private

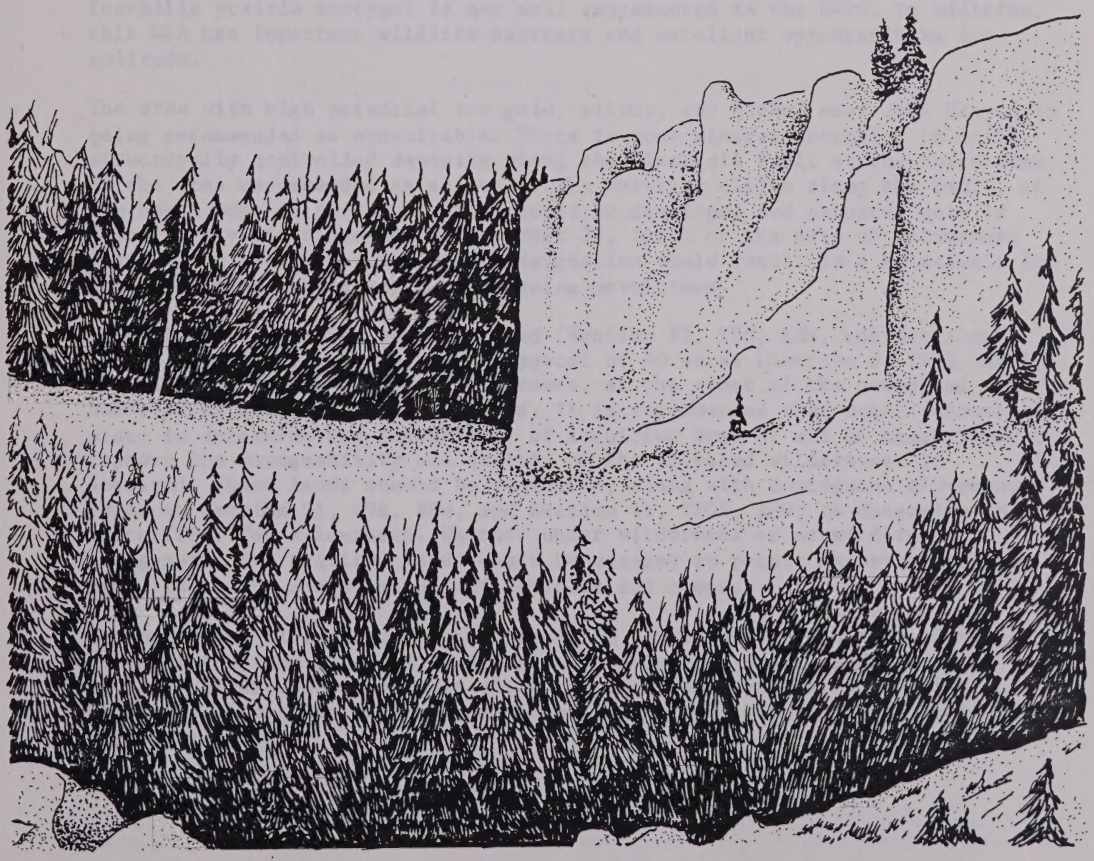
Paved Road

0 1 2 3 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

Blacktail Mountains WSA
MT-076-002

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS, MT-076-002

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Blacktail Mountains Wilderness Study Area contains 17,479 acres with no inholdings and is being studied under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

A total of 10,586 acres is recommended as preliminarily suitable for wilderness designation, and an area of 6,893 acres is recommended as not suitable. Recommended for wilderness is the portion of the study area with the highest wilderness quality, (naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation), while the part of the area with the highest mineral potential is proposed as nonwilderness.

The area recommended as preliminarily suitable encompasses the rugged north face of the Blacktail Mountains, the crest of the range, and over 2,000 acres south of the crest in open, rolling terrain. This WSA's primary wilderness qualities consist of a diversity of four ecosystems, one of which (the foothills prairie ecotype) is not well represented in the NWPS. In addition, this WSA has important wildlife habitats and excellent opportunities for solitude.

The area with high potential for gold, silver, and nickel near Jake Canyon is being recommended as nonsuitable. There is some mineral potential in small, structurally controlled deposits along the Blacktail Fault at the north edge of the area recommended as suitable. The existing claims along the fault, at the north edge of the study area, could be developed and patented only if there is a valid discovery by December 31, 1983, or the date of wilderness designation, whichever is later. Designation would result in a relatively low increase in operating costs for grazing permittees.

A total of 1,280 acres of state land (Section 32, T9S, R8W, and Sections 10-11, T10S, R8W) and one private parcel of 40 acres (Section 5, T10S, R8W), lie adjacent to the proposed wilderness, at the crest of the range and the heads of Ashbough and Riley canyons. It is recommended that negotiations take place to determine the feasibility of acquiring some or all of these lands to improve the manageability and quality of the proposed wilderness. If acquired, these lands should be evaluated, along with contiguous BLM-managed lands in Section 31, T9S, R8W, and Section 11, T10S, R8W, to determine their suitability for wilderness. Whether under wilderness or nonwilderness management, the acquired lands would be managed to permit existing grazing uses, including use of motorized vehicles and camps.

The preferred alternative in the final EIS represents a reduction of 400 acres in the area proposed as wilderness during the draft stage. Minor boundary adjustments were made along the west and southeast boundaries, primarily to provide logical boundaries in the event the adjacent state lands are not acquired.

It is also recommended that enabling legislation be enacted to allow the use of motorized vehicles associated with a seasonal sheep camp in a portion of the Blacktail Mountains WSA. Vehicle use essential to the grazing operation is not allowed by BLM's Wilderness Management Policy. The enabling legislation would pertain to existing public land within the WSA, and any of the other identified state or private lands acquired through future land adjustments and included within the boundaries of the proposed Blacktail Mountains Wilderness Area by further legislative action. There is no legally established public access to this WSA. The current land use plan calls for access up Ashbough Canyon, and there are also other feasible access routes, such as Riley Canyon.

The northern 10,586-acre portion of the WSA is manageable as wilderness. The WSA is of good size and configuration, has no inholdings, has easily identifiable boundaries, and has very limited access for ORVs. Manageability can be further enhanced with land tenure adjustments. The southern portion of the WSA, however, is not manageable as wilderness because its boundaries are not easily identifiable.

Table 6 provides a summary of the acreage involved in the proposal.

TABLE 6

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Blacktail Mountains WSA (MT-076-002)	17,479
Gross Total 17,479 acres	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	6,893
Gross Total 6,893 acres	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	10,586
Gross Total 10,586 acres	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Blacktail Mountains WSA is approximately twelve miles south of Dillon, Montana. Roughly rectangular, it measures more than eleven miles long by one to five miles wide. There are no inholdings. However, there are contiguous state and private lands that would add to the quality and manageability of the proposed wilderness area.

Boundaries

All boundaries are formed by the border between public and nonpublic land except on the west, where a road and a fence form a portion of the boundary. There is no legal public access to reach this area. Some private roads are not now posted, but that situation could change.

General Environment

The WSA consists primarily of the summit of the Blacktail range, extending more than eleven miles in a northwest-southeast direction. Drainages leading north and northeast from the plateau are also in the WSA; many of them are deep, timbered canyons with dramatic cliffs and headwalls. Spruce, Douglas-fir, and limber pine are the dominant tree species in these canyons. Roughly half the drainages are seasonally dry. The crest is characterized by open, rolling topography and grassland-sagebrush plant communities.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The area is primarily natural in appearance, with the few imprints of man limited mainly to the open western and southern slope. This unit contains less than eight miles of vehicle ways, about three and one-half miles of which are within one-quarter mile of the boundary. Most of the other imprints also are within one-quarter mile of the boundary. There is low to moderate impact in the bottom of Ashbough Canyon and in the bottom of the north fork of Jake Canyon where timber was harvested in the early part of this century.

Overall, the WSA is in a nearly pristine condition. A 3,880-acre area in the northwest part of the unit is not leased for domestic grazing.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The WSA's vegetative and topographic diversity contribute to outstanding opportunities for solitude and for outstanding hiking, camping, and big game hunting.

Solitude. Topographic relief varies from about 6,200 feet at the mouth of Irishman's Hole to 9,477 feet at the top of an unnamed peak near the center of the unit. Terrain in most of the WSA is steep and well dissected. All or parts of the headwaters of ten major drainages are in the WSA, and many smaller drainages also head within the unit. Timber, which is mainly in the drainages, provides excellent screening in these areas.

In general, topography and vegetation combine to provide excellent screening throughout most of the WSA. The numerous canyons help disperse visitors, and the lack of significant outside sights and sounds adds to the sense of isolation. All these factors contribute to the outstanding opportunities for solitude in the WSA. Only in the narrow southeast finger of the WSA are these opportunities restricted. This is the area recommended for nonwilderness in the preferred alternative.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The diversity of the WSA provides many opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

Backpacking, camping, and big game hunting are the major attractions, but the opportunities for day hiking, horseback riding, sightseeing, nature study, and rockhounding are also excellent. Opportunities for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are good in winter. The steep slopes and cliffs of the drainages make cross-country travel difficult and challenging. All these factors combine to provide high quality opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Special Features

The WSA provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including mule deer, elk, and moose. There is some winter range for mule deer in Jake Canyon, and parts of the WSA have been identified as elk winter range and calving grounds. Elk and deer also use the WSA in spring, summer, and fall. There is also suitable, unoccupied bighorn sheep and peregrine falcon habitat in the WSA.

The complex folded and faulted geology of the area offers opportunities for study by amateur geologists. Cultural resources are moderately significant.

The five peaks higher than 9,000 feet offer outstanding panoramic views, some of which exceed eighty miles on a clear day. Scenic quality and variety within the WSA are outstanding, with cliffs and free-standing rock walls, timbered slopes, cirque basins, and rolling subalpine terrain.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

There are currently ORV restrictions in this area to protect important elk and deer winter range. Wilderness designation would guarantee the long-term continuation of these restrictions. The Blacktail Ridge contains suitable habitat for both bighorn sheep and peregrine falcon. Although there are no existing plans for introducing these species, wilderness designation would preserve suitable habitat for them over the long term.

Restrictions on mineral development would have a beneficial effect on wildlife by protecting existing security cover and wildlife use patterns.

Restrictions on timber harvesting and road construction would ensure the long-term availability of security cover. Designation would also protect native vegetation and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities. Moderately important cultural resources could receive some additional protection from wilderness designation. Wilderness designation would also aid in the long-term maintenance of the outstanding scenic values of the Blacktail Mountains.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. The WSA contains four major ecotypes: Douglas-fir forest; sagebrush steppe and foothills prairie, which are generally near the top of the ridge and on the gentler southwest side; and small amounts of the alpine meadows and barren ecotype. Most of the area in the foothills prairie ecosystem, a type that is underrepresented in the wilderness system, lies on the crest of the Blacktail Range at elevations of 8,000 to over 9,000 feet.

Representation of the other three types is not a significant factor in the suitability determination, but representation of the foothills prairie component is considered significant due to the relative underrepresentation of the type and its somewhat unusual, high elevation occurrence in the Blacktails.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The Blacktail Mountains WSA is within five hours of Great Falls. However, the designation of the Blacktail Mountains would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within one day's driving time of Great Falls because Great Falls is near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this WSA as wilderness would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region and would somewhat expand the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8%, and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of the Blacktail Mountains WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

The entire WSA is not manageable as wilderness. The southeastern portion is narrow and irregular, providing few opportunities for solitude. The potential for hardrock minerals in this area is high as well, which could result in management problems. The preferred alternative, however, eliminates those portions of the WSA that are not manageable as wilderness and leaves a

consolidated block of land that is manageable as wilderness over the long term (see the Blacktail Mounains WSA map). The preferred alternative also provides an easily identifiable eastern boundary for the general public.

Although the area recommended as preliminarily suitable is manageable as wilderness, there are opportunities to improve the management situation and the quality of the area through acquisition of state and private lands. For example, the E1/2, Section 10 and the W1/2, Section 11, T10S, R8W, which are owned by the state of Montana, are at the head of Riley Canyon and at the crest of the Blacktail Range. The state-owned Section 32, T9S, R8W, and the privately-owned NE1/4NW1/4 of Section 5, T10S, R8W, encompasses another part of the Blacktail Range crest and the head of Ashbough Canyon. BLM acquisition of these parcels would bring the entire ridge, which is a natural travel route, and the heads of two major canyons into the preliminary suitable wilderness area. It also would make possible the use of recognizable natural and constructed features as boundaries.

Overall, there are no major impacts on long-term, effective management of the recommended portion of the Blacktail Mountains WSA as wilderness. Many of the existing uses of the state lands involved could continue without significant impact on wilderness features if some or all of these lands were eventually designated as wilderness.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

If the entire WSA were designated as wilderness, exploration of land with high potential for gold and silver and fair potential for nickel may be significantly impacted. In the Partial Wilderness alternative the high potential land would be available for exploration and only low potential lands would be affected.

Available information indicates that the overall mineral potential of the WSA is low, with two exceptions: the vicinity of the fault along the northeast face of the Blacktail Mountain range has good potential for small, structurally controlled deposits of silver, copper, and gold, and an area in Jake Canyon has high potential for silver and nickel.

The area of mineral potential along the Blacktail Fault lies at the northern edge of the study area. Most of the area with mineral potential probably lies outside the study area or just inside the boundaries. Wilderness designation could adversely affect development of the Jake Canyon area and, to a lesser degree, the Blacktail Fault area.

Impacts of Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. There would be little effect on current recreation use or opportunities. The only existing vehicle routes extending any distance into the WSA are very lightly used routes from the south. Public recreation access to Ashbough Canyon, as proposed in the current land use plan would not be affected. Other feasible access routes, such as Riley Canyon, also exist, and the public access situation would be similar under wilderness or nonwilderness.

Livestock Grazing. There are four allotments with a total of 423 AUMs in the study area. About 3,880 acres are not leased for grazing. There would be no impacts to improvements and stocking levels and relatively low additional operating costs to permittees.

Timber Management. While the WSA does contain commercial timber, that timber is not considered economic to harvest. Therefore, wilderness designation would not have any significant effect on timber harvest.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

The area north and west of the Jake/Riley Canyon divide would presumably remain in a substantially natural condition unless timber and mining operations became extensive at some time in the future. The area around Jake Canyon would likely receive some adverse impacts due to hardrock mining activity. The important big game winter range in the Jake Canyon area could be adversely affected.

Public Comments. This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Potential short-term economic benefits of mineral extraction would be lost if the area were designated wilderness. There could be long-term benefits related to preservation of wildlife habitat, scenic values, and primitive recreation opportunities, however.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Blacktail Mountains area is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state, or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors.

Although it is apparent that the BLM cannot completely resolve the inconsistency between this county's plan and the Agency's legal mandate and program policy to recommend suitable areas for wilderness, the study has incorporated an analysis of the local economic effects of wilderness designation and nondesignation. Local economic concerns have been a major factor in deriving recommendations for this WSA. For example, the area with the highest mineral potential has been eliminated from the area recommended as preliminarily suitable; however, the wilderness recommendation is still in conflict with the county policy statement.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Three alternatives were considered--All Wilderness (17,479 acres wilderness), No Wilderness (No Action), and Partial Wilderness (10,586 acres wilderness). Two new alternatives were proposed for the Blacktail Mountains during the formal comment period. One alternative would drop the area essentially northwest of Weston Canyon from the wilderness proposal if adjacent state lands are not acquired on a willing basis. However, management concerns and/or conflicts are not signifiant enough to outweigh the additional benefits to be gained by including this canyon.

Another alternative proposed would enlarge the proposed wilderness area by adding a part of upper Jake Canyon and an area outside the southern boundary of the WSA in upper Long Creek including exchange for two sections of state land. The Jake Canyon area mentioned is proposed as nonwilderness due to a conflict with minerals, and exchange for the Long Creek area is considered outside the scope of this study as defined by BLM's study procedures, which allow boundary expansions in some cases involving only small acreages. The proposal concerning exchange for lands in Ashbough and Riley canyons is considered feasible under these procedures, while expansion into Long Creek is not. Therefore, this alternative was dropped.

A total of 400 acres was deleted from the partial wilderness alternative in response to public comments. Minor boundary adjustments were made on the west and southeast to provide logical boundaries in the event the adjacent state lands are not acquired.

Table 7 is a summary of potential impacts for the three alternatives that were fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The Partial Wilderness alternative is the preferred alternative. All feasible means to avoid unnecessary environmental impacts have been adopted.

Monitoring and Enforcement

If part of the WSA is designated wilderness as proposed, a Wilderness Management Plan will be prepared to protect natural values. If part of the WSA is released from wilderness consideration as proposed, existing regulations and policies will guide management of this area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

Table 7

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (17,479 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for predominantly Douglas-fir and foothills prairie ecosystems. High wilderness values in northern portion, lesser values in southeast. Important wildlife values throughout. Adjacent lands contribute to area's overall appeal.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Irregular land ownership configuration in southeast.	Slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 8 miles of lightly traveled vehicle ways.	Anticipated very slight potential for improvement in quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreational use.	Ensures long term preservation of outstanding scenic values.	Continued availability and permanent protection of security cover for deer and elk is ensured. Preservation of habitat for species introduction is ensured.	May have a significant impact on the availability for exploration for gold and silver and fair potential for nickel.	No significant impacts, except low increase in operating costs.	No short-term impacts. Long-term loss of 2.8 mmbf harvest potential/decade, not currently economical to harvest.	Reduced opportunity to create jobs and income from mining particularly for gold and silver. Possible slight increase in local income from nonmotorized recreation. Increased cost to grazing operators.
NO WILDERNESS	Possible impacts of mineral development southeast of Jake/Riley divide. Low probability of major change in remainder.	No Impact.	No impact.	Both slightly positive and slightly negative effects on quality and quantity of nonmotorized recreation.	No anticipated short-term impacts to values on north face of range. Potential for long-term degradation of outstanding values on remainder of WSA.	Short-term protection of important habitat and security cover is provided. Potential adverse impacts on deer and elk habitat in the long term. Moderate potential for long-term decrease in elk populations and long-term decrease in hunting opportunities.	No impact on mineral exploration or development.	No impacts.	No impacts.	All mineral opportunities remain. Possible loss of some "amenity" benefits.
PARTIAL WILDERNESS (10,586 acres) (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Same as All Wilderness except area of lesser wilderness values excluded.	Minor potential for future manageability problems.	Very slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 2.5 miles of lightly traveled vehicle ways.	Both slightly positive and slightly negative effects on quality and quantity of nonmotorized recreation.	Ensures long-term protection of outstanding scenic values on north face of range. Potential for long-term degradation of outstanding values on remainder of WSA.	Permanent long-term protection of the major portions of deer and elk winter range are not ensured. Slight to moderate long-term potential for decrease in elk populations and decrease in hunting opportunities.	May impact the availability for exploration for gold and silver only on those lands with the lesser potential. No impact on availability of lands with highest potential for gold, silver, and nickel.	No significant impacts.	No short-term impacts. Long-term loss of 2.0 mmbf/decade, not currently economical to harvest.	Same as All Wilderness except a much smaller impact on opportunity to create jobs and income from mining. Smaller cost increases to grazing operators.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved the adverse effects of wilderness designation on grazing permittees, mineral extraction, timber harvest and adjacent land uses, and the benefits of wilderness for wildlife.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments were received on the Dillon MFP that related specifically to the Blacktail Mountains WSA.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Fifty-one comments were received on the Blacktail Mountains WSA. Twelve comments supported the BLM proposal for partial wilderness, while thirty-one comments opposed wilderness designation. Four respondents favored wilderness for the entire area under study. Two proposed new alternatives that would expand the size of the proposed wilderness, and one proposed an alternative that would reduce the size of the area. One comment addressed adjacent state lands only and gave no clear opinion.

Those opposing wilderness designation were primarily concerned with the effects on grazing operations (particularly on one permittee in the area). This was mentioned in eighteen comments. Several respondents believed grazing and wilderness are not compatible. Other respondents believed that the area has mineral potential; that there would be adverse effects on state lands; that the area should not be proposed when no public access exists; and that the area lacks outstanding wilderness characteristics.

Those in favor of all or partial wilderness believed that the area has significant wilderness value and that wildlife habitat would benefit from designation. Respondents also expressed the belief that grazing operations would not be harmed by designation, that there is a need for public access to the area, and that BLM should initiate a land exchange program with the state to consolidate ownership.

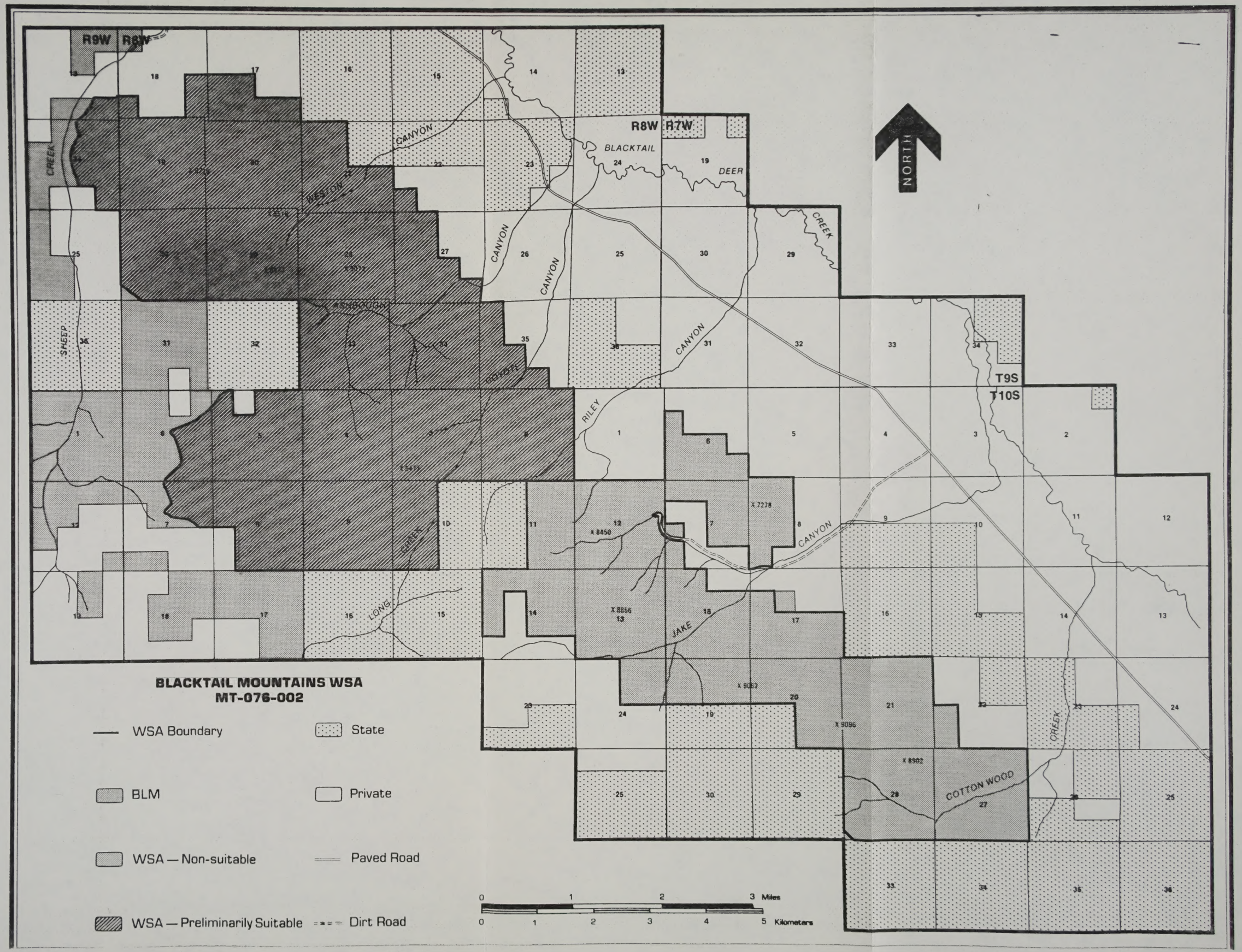
The preferred alternative represents a reduction of 400 acres in the area proposed in the draft.

A total of fifty-one comments were received on Blacktail Mountains WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	51	6	12	1	31	1

Comments Received from State and Local Governments or Other Government Agencies

Holly Smith, Beaverhead County Planning Board, said that wilderness designation for part of the Blacktail Mounains WSA would be "acceptable" only if private and state lands were acquired on a willing basis and if motor vehicle use by grazing permittees were allowed to continue. No other comments were received from state or local governments or other government agencies that related to the Blacktail Mountains WSA.


R9W
R8W
R8W
R7W
NORTH
T9S
T10S
CANYON
BLACKTAIL
DEER
CREEK
WESTON
CANYON
CANYON
CANYON
CREEK
SHEEP
SHSOUGH
COYOTE
RILEY
CANYON
CREEK
LONG
JAKE
CREEK
COTTON WOOD
X 8450
X 7228
X 8856
X 9062
X 9096
X 8982
BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS WSA
MT-076-002
WSA Boundary
State
BLM
Private
WSA — Non-suitable
Paved Road
WSA — Preliminarily Suitable
Dirt Road
0 1 2 3 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA MT-076-007

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 85, OC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225

East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA MT-076-007

EAST FORK OF BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK, MT-076-007

ACREAGE SUMMARY

The East Fork WSA contains 6,230 acres, with no inholdings. This WSA is being studied for wilderness preservation under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

The East Fork is recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation. Although the area has significant special features--wildlife habitats, scenic quality, and a diversity of vegetative types--its small size and the existence of a road corridor within the unit along the East Fork limit opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The road corridor is also considered to be a significant management concern. The road could be closed at the public land boundary to improve wilderness opportunities, but the important motorized recreation use for hunting, fishing, and camping along the road would be displaced and wilderness opportunities would only be slightly improved. There were no other conflicts with other resources or uses identified in the study.

Current management consists of no surface occupancy restrictions on mineral leases, prohibition of timber harvest, an ORV closure (exceot for the East Fork Road) and a wildlife habitat management plan. These provisions are considered adequate to protect the area's special features. The area may be considered for designation as an ACEC at a later date if any of these management components change or if the WSA's special values are threatened.

The WSA is not manageable as wilderness. This is due to its small size; irregular, nonphysiographic boundaries; and road corridors providing easy ORV access.

Table 8 provides a statisical summary for this WSA.

TABLE 8

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR EAST FORK OF THE BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek WSA (MT-076-007)	6,230
Gross Total 6,230 acres	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	6,230
Gross Total 6,230 acres	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	0

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The East Fork WSA is about thrity-three miles southeast of Dillon, Montana.

The public can reach the area via the improved Blacktail Deer Creek road and then a more primitive road that runs up the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek to the boundary.

Boundaries

This WSA is roughly triangular, with an irregular boundary that almost entirely follows legal subdivisions. There is private land on the north; the state-owned Blacktail Game Range essentially forms the northwestern boundary. Land on the east and south is Beaverhead National Forest land. There are no inholdings, but a road corridor that is excluded from the WSA extends into the body of the unit for more than 1 mile along the East Fork road, forming an intruding "finger" (see the East Fork WSA map).

General Environment

The unit is dominated by three relatively large drainages; the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek; Crows Nest Creek, which flows into the East Fork; and Robb Creek. Portions of Taylor, Rock, Indian, and Alkali creeks are also in the WSA, as are several smaller streams that flow directly into the East Fork. The WSA, which is on the west slope of the Snowcrest Range, contains open sagebrush foothills, grass parks, aspen and willow groves, alpine meadows, barren talus slopes, and Douglas-fir and limber pine forests.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The area is primarily natural in character. Vehicle ways totaling less than three miles extend into the WSA for short distances.

Solitude. Most of the three and one-half miles of fence is adjacent to the boundary. The naturalness of the East Fork WSA is one of its most outstanding characteristics.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Excellent vegetative screening and topographic diversity in this WSA create outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area offers a diversity of recreation opportunities. Several of these opportunities, including hunting, hiking, and backpacking, are of outstanding quality.

Solitude. Most of the terrain in the WSA is well-dissected. Timber and aspen-willow groves occupy about 60% of the area, providing pockets of seclusion among the interspersed meadows and parks.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Opportunities for hiking and backpacking in the WSA are excellent. Horseback riding also is possible, but it is limited by the steep topography. A feature of interest to visitors is the way plant communities ranging from grass-sagebrush to alpine can be seen in a short distance.

Opportunities to observe and photograph wildlife are excellent. Elk, mule deer, moose, black bear, and mountain goats use the area. The East

The public can reach the area via the improved Blackfoot Base Creek road and then a more primitive road that runs up the East Fork of Blackfoot Base Creek to the boundary.

Boundaries

This WSA is roughly triangular, with an irregular boundary that almost entirely follows legal subdivisions. There is private land on the north; the aforementioned Blackfoot Base Canal essentially forms the northeastern boundary. Land on the east and south is Reserved National Forest land. There are no inholdings, but a road corridor that is excluded from the WSA extends into the body of its unit for more than 1 mile along the East Fork road, forming an intruding "finger" (see the Sand Pass WSA map).

Physical Environment

The unit is dominated by three relatively large drainages; the East Fork of Blackfoot Base Creek, Water Creek, which flows into the East Fork, and Pole Creek. Portions of Taylor, Bear, Indian, and Alkali Creeks are also in the WSA, as are several smaller streams that flow directly into the East Fork. The WSA, which is on the west slope of the Snowcrest Range, contains open meadows (locally wet), grass parks, aspen and mahogany groves, alpine meadows, barren rocky slopes, and Douglas-fir and limber pine forests.

APPRAISAL OF WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Naturalness of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Naturalness Characteristics

Naturalness. The area is primarily natural in character. Vehicle ways totaling less than three miles extend into the WSA for short distances.

Solitude. Most of the three and one-half miles of fence is adjacent to the boundary. The naturalness of the East Fork WSA is one of its most outstanding characteristics.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Vegetal separation screening and topographic diversity in this WSA create outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area offers a diversity of recreation opportunities. Several of these opportunities, including hunting, fishing, and backpacking, are of outstanding quality.

Solitude. Most of the terrain in the WSA is well-dissected. Timber and sagebrush-willow grasses occupy about 90% of the area, providing pockets of seclusion among the interspersed meadows and parks.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Opportunities for hiking and backpacking in the WSA are excellent. Horseback riding also is possible, but is limited by the steep topography. A feature of interest to visitors is the very steep mountains ranging from grass-vegetated slopes one to over 11 miles distance.

Opportunities to observe and photograph wildlife are excellent. Elk, mule deer, moose, black bear, and mountain goats use the area. The East

Fork WSA offers some of the most outstanding elk hunting in southwestern Montana.

Although the physical features within the WSA are conducive to excellent solitude and recreation, these opportunities and carrying capacity are adversely affected by the cherrystem road corridor along the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek, combined with the small size of the area.

The road up the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek effectively divides the WSA into two pieces with about one-third of the unit southwest of the road and two-thirds northeast. Essentially, users must choose which side of the road to visit. Only one drainage, the three-mile long Crows Nest Creek, is entirely enclosed by the unit's boundaries.

The area's small size and the road corridor limit the opportunities for solitude and wilderness recreation, as well as limiting the area's carrying capacity.

Special Features

The WSA contains important spring-summer-fall elk range and elk calving habitat, complementing the adjacent Blacktail Game Range, which serves primarily as winter range for elk. The WSA also offers excellent spring-summer-fall range for mule deer and contains habitat for moose and mountain goats.

High quality scenery, including views of the high peaks of the Snowcrest range and the diverse vegetative patterns in the unit, is an important special feature.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would aid in the long-term maintenance of extremely important elk habitat and excellent mule deer, mountain goat, and moose habitat. It would maintain vegetative cover for forage for big game, especially elk, assuring the preservation of winter thermal cover and security cover for the elk calving. Restricting vehicle use would also reduce stress on these species. Designation would also protect native vegetation, soil, and water resources by restricting disturbing activities. Wilderness would also ensure the maintenance of the East Fork's outstanding scenic values by requiring that all new projects blend into the natural landscape.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions, and current management provides most of these benefits. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. This unit contains four major ecosystems: Douglas-fir forest, alpine meadows and barren, foothills prairie, and sagebrush steppe. The presence of these four types in such a small area is considered significant, although the representation of any single ecosystem is not a major factor in the recommendation.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The East Fork WSA is not within a day's drive of any identified population centers.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. From the perspectives of wilderness in the nation; in the three-state region of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho; and in relatively close proximity to urban centers within Montana, designation of this WSA would not be nationally or regionally significant. Designation of this WSA would, however, extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region and would expand somewhat the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of this WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

The WSA cannot be managed as wilderness over the long term because of its small size and irregular boundaries and the uncertain long-term management of the adjacent lands.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Wilderness designation would have an insignificant effect on mineral development, based on existing information. The overall mineral potential of this WSA is rated as low for both locatable and leaseable minerals.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness

designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. Wilderness designation would have an insignificant effect on existing recreation uses and opportunities. There are few motorized recreation opportunities, and the existing primitive recreation opportunities would continue.

However, if the East Fork road were closed to improve wilderness opportunities, the important recreation use along the road would be displaced. Current use is about 1,300 recreation visits yearly, most of which involve motorized use of this road.

Wildlife. Wilderness would not change many of the constraints now being applied to other activities and programs to maintain and/or improve wildlife habitat, such as the no surface occupancy stipulation that is attached to oil and gas leases in the area.

Elk appear to be the species most sensitive to vehicle use in the WSA. Current vehicle restrictions, developed in cooperation with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, limit vehicle use to the main East Fork road, which is open from May 16 to November 30 of each year. If wilderness, the entire area would be closed year-round to all motor vehicle use, including snowmobiles.

Livestock Grazing. The East Fork WSA contains one grazing allotment with 467 AUMs. There would be no significant impacts to proposed range improvements or stocking levels.

Timber Management. The evaluation of the study area timber shows a negative present net worth. In the short run, timber harvest in this priorities--elk habitat in particular. There would be no significant impact to timber management under wilderness designation.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

The East Fork WSA, at least in the short term, will likely remain essentially roadless, with substantial restrictions on major development activities and motorized vehicle travel. Its special features are substantially protected under current management. However, any future timber removal, road construction, or mineral development would have a significant adverse affect on the WSA's wilderness characteristics and special features.

designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the Smoky WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. Wilderness designation would have no significant effect on existing recreation uses and opportunities. There are few motorized recreation opportunities, and the existing primitive recreation opportunities would continue.

However, if the East Fork road were closed to improve wilderness opportunities, the important recreation use along the road would be displaced. Current use is about 1,300 recreation visits yearly, most of which involve motorized use of this road.

Wildlife. Wilderness would not change many of the conditions now being applied to other activities and programs to maintain and/or improve wildlife habitat, such as the no surface occupancy stipulation that is attached to oil and gas leases in the area.

It appears to be the agencies most sensitive to vehicle use in the WSA. Current wildlife restrictions, developed in cooperation with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, limit vehicle use to the main East Fork road, which is open from May 16 to December 31 of each year. If wilderness, the entire area would be closed year-round to all motor vehicle use, including snowmobiles.

Livestock Grazing. The East Fork WSA contains one grazing allotment with two AUMs. There would be no significant impacts to projected range improvements or grazing levels.

Timber Management. The withdrawing of the Smoky area (about 4% suitable) would not affect the timber harvest in this activity-rich habitat in particular. There would be no significant impact to timber management under wilderness designation.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

The East Fork WSA, at least in the short term, will likely remain essentially roadless, with substantial restrictions on motor development activities and motorized vehicle travel. Its special features are substantially protected under current management. However, any future timber removal, road construction, or mineral development would have a significant adverse effect on the WSA's wilderness characteristics and special features.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Commodity resources are limited in this WSA, so wilderness designation would have little effect on extractive industries. Long-term preservation of important wildlife habitats and significant recreation opportunities could have a positive effect locally, although current management substantially protects these features.

Consistency with Other Plans

The East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors. The preferred alternative is consistent with the county's policy statement.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks manages the Blacktail Game Range, which is contiguous to the East Fork WSA. Although there is no formal, approved plan, the department has a management program that emphasizes maintaining adequate forage and limiting human and vehicle disturbance. Management of adjacent federal lands is related to the success of the state's management program because big game habitats extend across land ownership boundaries.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Two alternatives were considered for the East Fork WSA--All Wilderness (6,230 acres) and No Wilderness (No Action).

The All Wilderness alternative analyzed in the draft included closure of the East Fork road at the public land boundary, and inclusion of the road corridor in wilderness. While this closure would improve wilderness opportunities, it would displace an important existing use, recreation access by vehicle and camping along the road. Three comments proposed that the area be designated wilderness with the road left open. However, wilderness quality and management concerns with the road open also lead to a nonsuitable recommendation. The All Wilderness alternative has been amended to include both options--closing the road and leaving it open.

Two other alternatives were proposed in comments. One would recommend a joint BLM-Forest Service wilderness including the entire watershed of the upper East Fork, about 20,000 acres total. This alternative, however, is outside the scope of this study. The national forest lands were reviewed in the 1978 Beaverhead National Forest land management plan and released from further wilderness consideration. Prior to this study, in February 1981, BLM approached FS officials on the question of a joint study, and it was revealed that FS policy is not to consider previous wilderness decisions in its first generation forest plans. Therefore, no national forest lands were included in the scope of this study. In discussions with FS officials after the public comment period, the above policy was restated. They further emphasized that existing, as well as land use allocations proposed in their current land use planning effort, are focused on range and wildlife management prescriptions designed to enhance existing wildlife and scenic values.

The other alternative mentioned in comments is designation as an ACEC. The current land use plan calls for the area to be considered as an ACEC. Current management, however, consists of no surface occupancy restrictions on mineral leases, prohibition of timber harvest, an ORV closure (except for the East Fork Road), and a wildlife habitat management plan. These are considered adequate at this time to protect the area's special features. The East Fork may be considered as an ACEC at a later date if any of these management components change or if its special values are considered threatened.

Table 9 is a summary of potential impacts of each of the two alternatives that were fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The No Wilderness Alternative is the preferred alternative. All feasable mitigating measures to prevent unnecessary environmental degradation will be applied to future management actions through the environmental analysis process.

Monitoring and Enforcement

When the area is released from wilderness consideration, existing regulations and policies will guide management of the area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved benefits and adverse effects of wilderness designation on wildlife habitat; manageability concerns; and timber and oil and gas potential of the area.

Table 9

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

EAST FORK OF BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (6,230 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for relatively equal proportions of each of 4 major ecosystems; contains important special wildlife features.	Significant potential for future manageability problems. Irregular land ownership boundary, small size, management uncertainties on adjacent lands.	Significant reduction in motorized recreation due to closure of East Fork Road.	Anticipated slight potential for improvement of quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreational use.	Ensures long-term protection of existing outstanding scenic values.	Continued long-term protection of important elk and mule deer habitat is ensured. Additional protection to meet seasonal security cover needs for elk is provided.	No major impact on availability of lands for mineral exploration and development.	No significant impacts.	No short-term impacts. Long-term loss in harvest potential of 1.0 mmbf/decade. Not currently economical to harvest.	No impact on social and economic situation.
NO WILDERNESS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Area, with its special features, is substantially protected for the short term under current management.	No impact.	Some reduction in motorized vehicle recreation due to existing road restrictions.	No significant effect.	Ensures short-term protection of existing outstanding scenic values.	Some potential adverse impacts on security cover needs for elk. Short-term protection of most important habitat is provided. Some potential for long-term decreases in deer and elk populations.	No impact on mineral exploration and development.	No impacts.	No short-term impacts. Long-term loss of 0.8 mmbf/decade under current management. Not currently economical to harvest.	No impact on social and economic situation.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effect

No specific comments regarding this WSA were received.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Twenty-four comments were received that specifically mentioned the East Fork WSA. Fourteen of these favored wilderness designation, seven favored the nonwilderness proposal, and three favored alternative management, such as an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) or "backcountry."

Most of the individuals favoring wilderness designation believed designation would benefit important wildlife habitats in and adjacent to the WSA, and mentioned the importance of managing the area in conjunction with adjacent Beaverhead National Forest and Blacktail Game Range lands. Four individuals proposed a combined BLM-Forest Service wilderness or wilderness study. Three proposed that a wilderness alternative be considered that would not close the East Fork road. Two other comments indicated wilderness was favored because there was no assurance the area would be managed as an ACEC.

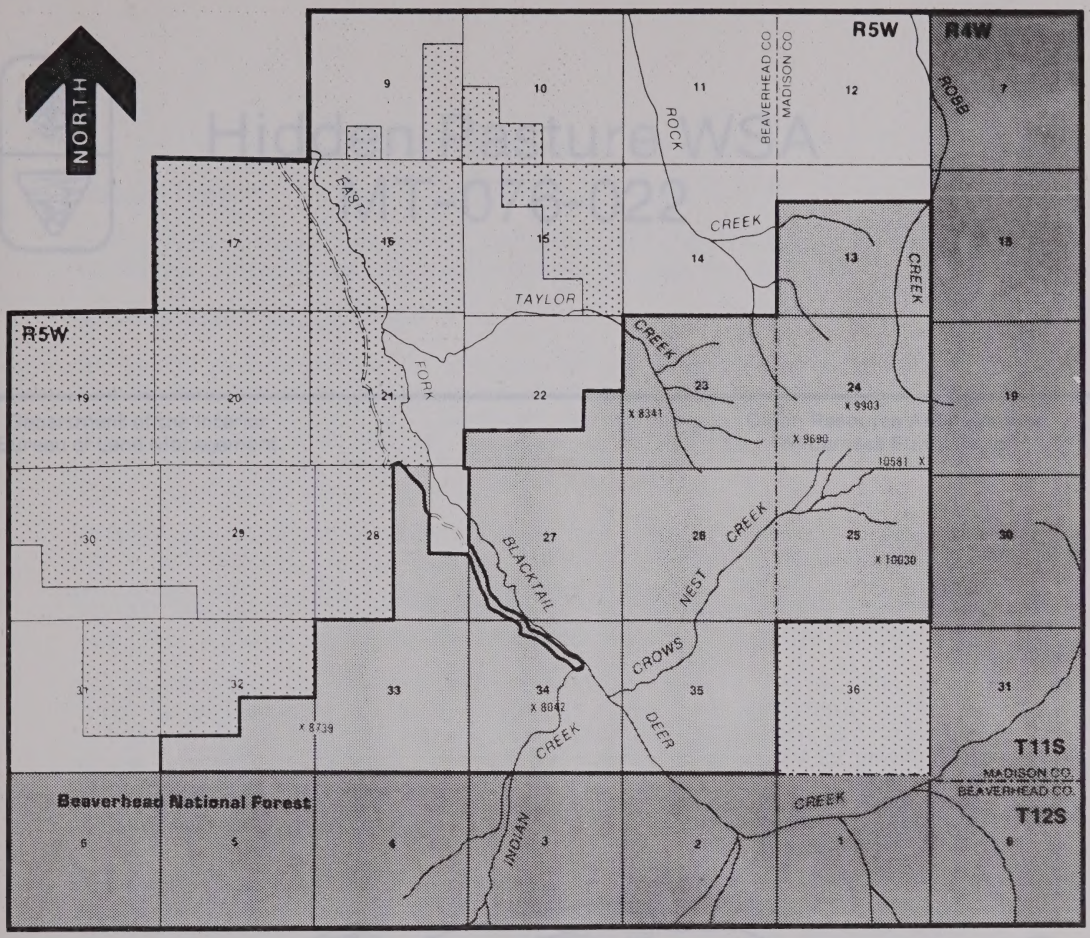
Most of those in favor of the preferred alternative, No Wilderness, believed the area was too small and not manageable as wilderness. One comment mentioned mineral potential in the area, and one favored nonwilderness management for a full range of uses, rather than as an ACEC.

A total of twenty-four comments were received on East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	24	14	7	0	3	0

Comments Received from State and Local Government and Other Government Agencies

Steven J. Durham, Environmental Protection Agency, supported long-term management to protect significant watershed values, including designation of the East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. No other comments that related to the East Fork WSA were received from state and local governments or other government agencies.



EAST FORK of BLACKTAIL DEER CREEK WSA
MT-076-007

WSA Boundary

BLM

Forest Service

Dirt Road

WSA — Non-suitable

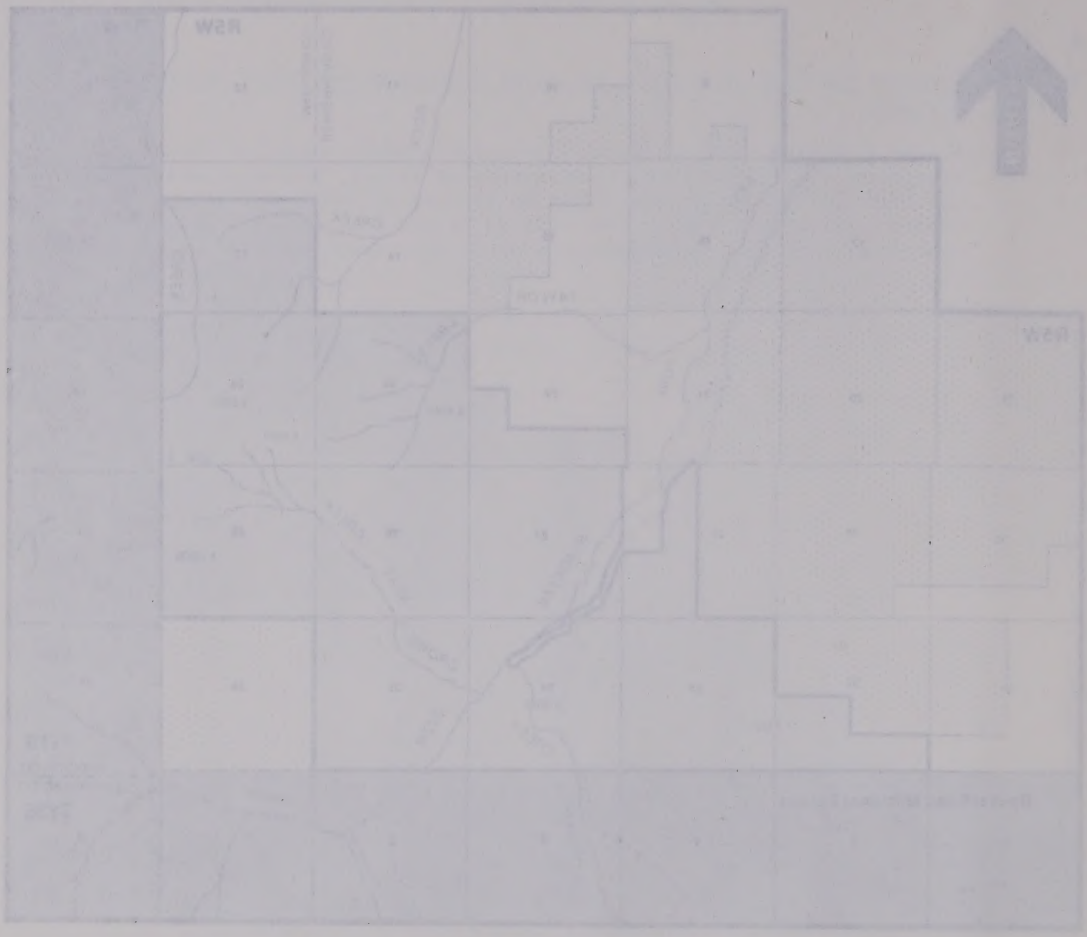
State

County Boundary

Private

0 1 2 3 Miles

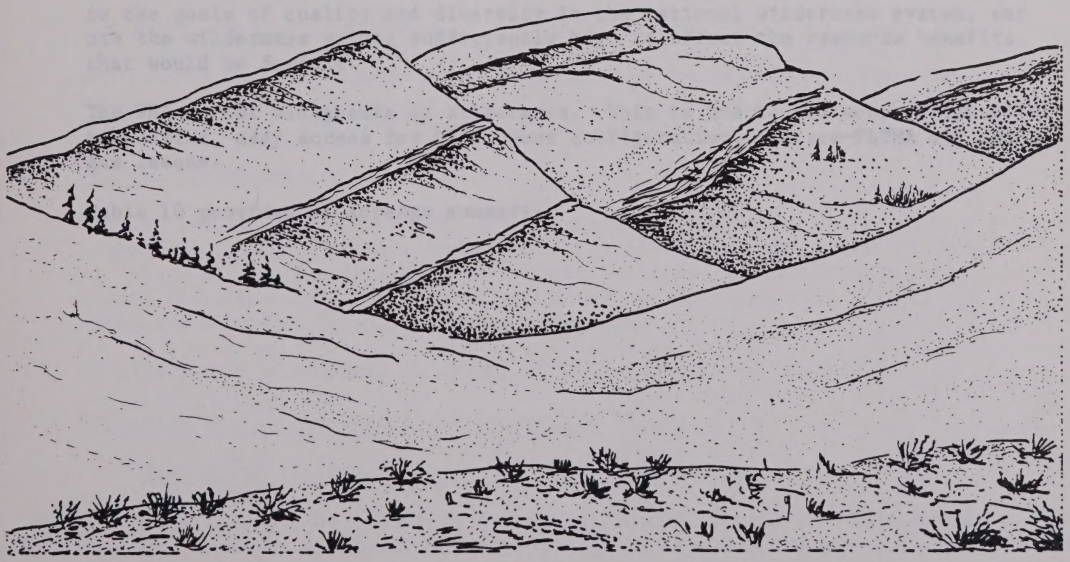
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers



Hidden Pasture WSA
MT-076-022

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



HIDDEN PASTURE CREEK, MT-076-022

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Hidden Pasture Creek contains 15,509 acres. This WSA is being studied for wilderness preservation under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

The WSA is recommended as not suitable for wilderness designation. The major factors considered in this recommendation are the area's relatively low overall wilderness quality (impacts on naturalness and low opportunities for solitude) and high oil and gas potential. A lesser consideration is the impact of wilderness designation on existing motorized recreation and routine livestock grazing uses.

Diverse and important wildlife habitats and important cultural resources are the area's primary special features. Under nonwilderness management, existing motorized vehicle restrictions offer some protection for wildlife, although any oil and gas development could impair the area's important wildlife habitats. A BLM wildlife habitat management plan is in effect in the WSA.

The current land use plan calls for the Hidden Pasture WSA, as part of a larger area including the Muddy Creek and Sheep Creek drainages, to be considered as an ACEC for its cultural, wildlife, fisheries, and watershed values. Current management, however, is considered adequate to protect the features in the WSA without special status. The WSA may be considered as an ACEC at a later date if any of the management components change or if the special values are threatened.

Recommending the WSA for nonwilderness does not represent a significant loss to the goals of quality and diversity in the national wilderness system, nor are the wilderness values sufficiently high to offset the resource benefits that would be forgone.

The WSA is not manageable as wilderness. This is due to its nonphysiographic boundaries, easy access for ORVs, poor configuration, and pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases.

Table 10 provides an acreage summary.

TABLE 10

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR HIDDEN PASTURE CREEK WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Hidden Pasture WSA (MT-076-022)	15,509
Also within WSA boundary:	
State 640 acres	
Gross Total 16,149	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	15,509
Also within nonsuitable boundary:	
State 640 acres	
Gross Total 16,149	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	0

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Hidden Pasture Creek WSA is in the southern Tendoy Mountains about forty miles south of Dillon, Montana. It forms a partial "U" shape around contiguous land of the Beaverhead National Forest. It includes a state-owned inholding.

Boundaries

The south and west boundaries of the WSA are formed mostly by roads. The remainder of the south and west boundaries are formed, like the entire eastern boundary, by the border between public and nonpublic lands. The boundary on the north and the inside of the "U" is the border between BLM-administered land and Beaverhead National Forest.

General Environment

Most of the WSA is open sagebrush and grassland, with some small patches of timber and mountain shrubs. More than forty minor drainages, most of which are seasonally dry, radiate in all directions from the center of the WSA. Hidden Pasture Creek, which flows south and southeast through the WSA for about three miles, is the only major drainage.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The intensive inventory recognized that the Hidden Pasture WSA contains a relatively large number of imprints of man, but concluded

that topographic relief provided adequate screening to reduce their cumulative effects. The WSA contains more than twenty-one miles of vehicle ways, about seventeen miles of fences, and eleven spring developments. Some of the impact of the vehicle ways could be diminished by natural regeneration under wilderness management.

Sagebrush spraying was done on approximately 9,500 acres in the northern part of the WSA in the early 1960s. At about the same time, contour furrowing was done in nine separate areas within the WSA totaling 722 acres. The effects of these activities are no longer readily apparent.

Although the number of impacts on naturalness is high in this WSA, their locations and spatial distribution help to mitigate the cumulative impact on the apparent naturalness of the whole WSA. However, a visitor could not travel more than a short distance in the WSA without encountering a number of these impacts. In summary, naturalness is only low to moderate.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The topographic relief in this WSA provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, while recreation opportunities are not outstanding.

Solitude. The poor configuration and irregular boundaries, however, limit the effective size of the WSA and therefore the opportunities for solitude as well as for primitive types of recreation. Terrain is generally rolling to moderately well-dissected, with numerous shallow drainages and open ridges. There is little vegetative screening to contribute to opportunities for solitude in most of the WSA. External influences are minimal, although much of the WSA slopes toward nonwilderness lands, and any future development on these lands would be detrimental to solitude and primitive recreation opportunities.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Opportunities for primitive recreation are not outstanding; however, the WSA is well suited to cross-country hiking; deer, elk, and antelope hunting; and horseback riding. Most use would probably be for short visits only because of the WSA's size and lack of surface water. Overall, although the WSA provides opportunities for some types of primitive recreation, neither the diversity of opportunities nor the quality of any one opportunity is outstanding.

Special Features

This WSA provides yearlong mule deer habitat and good antelope habitat. There is good spring-summer-fall range for a small elk population, and reintroduction of bighorn sheep is planned. Cultural resource values are considered high.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would result in additional protection of forage and vegetative cover essential for big game and upland game birds. Restrictions on vegetative manipulation projects, such as the sagebrush spraying which occurred in the past, would particularly benefit the antelope and sage grouse populations.

Wilderness designation also would be intrinsically more compatible with the introduction of bighorn sheep, although most management constraints needed to accommodate the introduction could still be applied without wilderness designation. Wilderness designation would guarantee the long-term continuation of these management directions.

Wilderness designation would also aid in protecting important cultural resources, native vegetation, scenic values, and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. The major ecosystem represented is the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. There are small amounts of Douglas-fir forest and foothills prairie types.

There are examples of the sagebrush steppe type in three units in the wilderness system and numerous opportunities other than those in this study for preservation of additional examples of this ecotype--primarily in relatively large BLM WSA's in northern Nevada, eastern Oregon, southern Wyoming, and southern Idaho, totalling over four million acres.

The Douglas-fir forest ecosystem is represented in eight designated wilderness areas in Montana alone. The foothills prairie type is currently included in only one designated wilderness. Nine other areas proposed for wilderness or under further study, however, contain this ecosystem, and one WSA recommended for wilderness in this study, the Blacktail Mountains, contains a representative area of this type.

Therefore, ecosystem representation is not a major factor affecting the suitability of Hidden Pasture Creek WSA, especially when its low overall wilderness quality is considered.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. This WSA is not within a day's driving time of any major population centers.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this WSA would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region, and would somewhat expand the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of this WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

This WSA is not manageable as wilderness over the long term. The predominance of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases and the area's high potential for oil and gas virtually assure some potentially impairing impacts. The WSA's poor configuration and location in open terrain sloping toward nonwilderness lands to the west would make it difficult to protect the WSA from the effects of future, offsite development. The irregular boundaries would make inadvertent trespass a problem, and grandfathered rights of maintaining the relatively large number of range improvements using motorized equipment would make management for a primitive experience somewhat difficult. The state inholding would also present a management problem concerning offsite sights and sounds and nonconforming uses, but acquisition of the section would eliminate this problem.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The WSA has relatively high potential for oil and gas. Designation of the area as wilderness could prevent extraction of these resources.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. The four interior vehicle routes currently open to travel in summer and fall would be closed under wilderness designation. Therefore, it would have a slightly adverse effect on motorized recreation.

Wildlife. Existing management direction restricts motor vehicles to four designated routes, which are open from May 16 to November 30 each year, in order to protect elk and deer winter range. Under wilderness designation, these four routes would be closed altogether. This could reduce future deer harvest, which could be detrimental to the population.

Livestock Grazing. There are four allotments with a combined total of over 2,000 AUMs in this WSA. There would be no significant impacts to improvements or stocking levels, but there could be a relatively high additional cost to grazing permittees due to restrictions on routine vehicle use.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

Adverse impacts to special features--particularly wildlife habitat--could occur if there were substantial oil and gas activity in the WSA. A nonwilderness decision would not be detrimental to the goal of ecosystem representation or to the goal of providing quality areas to add to the wilderness system. There are several highly qualified candidate areas under BLM management that contain the sagebrush steppe type, and the quality of the Hidden Pasture WSA's wilderness characteristics is rather low.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Economic benefits of oil and gas development could be forgone if the WSA were designated wilderness.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Hidden Pasture Creek area is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors. The preferred alternative is consistent with the county's policy statement.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Two alternatives were considered for Hidden Pasture Creek WSA--All Wilderness (15,509 acres wilderness) and No Wilderness. Two other alternatives were proposed in public comments. One would consider as wilderness this WSA, the Bell-Limekiln WSA, and Beaverhead National Forest lands linking these two units. These national forest lands were reviewed in the 1978 Beaverhead National Forest land management plan and released from further wilderness study. Prior to this study, in February 1981, BLM approached FS officials on the question of a joint study, and it was revealed that FS policy is not to reconsider previous wilderness decisions in its first generation forest plans. Therefore, no national forest lands were included in the scope of this study.

Another alternative mentioned in one comment is a partial wilderness proposal, which would recommend about 14,000 acres as wilderness, dropping the eastern "finger" from wilderness consideration. This alternative represents a minor boundary change from the All Wilderness alternative. This and an additional adjustment on the west edge of the unit were previously considered, but not selected for detailed analysis since these changes would not significantly improve wilderness quality or reduce resource conflicts over All Wilderness.

Table 11 is a summary of potential impacts for the two alternatives that were fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The No Wilderness Alternative is the preferred alternative. Management under the current MFP includes the following:

restrictions on vehicle access for wildlife habitat protection,

restrictions on changes in visual resources in the eastern portion of Hidden Pasture Creek, and

consideration of Hidden Pasture as an ACEC.

Monitoring and Enforcement

When the area is released from wilderness consideration, existing regulations and policies will guide management of the area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

Table 11

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

HIDDEN PASATURE CREEK

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (15,509 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for area with predominant sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Some wilderness values relatively low. Contains special wildlife habitat features.	Significant potential for future manageability problems. Boundaries irregular. One inholding would exist. Land exchange possible.	Moderate reduction in motorized recreational use associated with hunting due to discontinued availability of 10 miles of vehicle ways.	Anticipated slight potential for improvement in quantity and quality of nonmotorized vehicle use.	Ensures long-term protection of existing scenic values ranging from common to outstanding.	Would enhance long-term protection of sagebrush habitat for dependent species, antelope and sage grouse. Moderate to high potential for increase in mule deer and potential adverse impact on adequate deer harvest resulting in browse overuse.	No major impacts on availability of lands for exploration and development except for oil and gas where long-term availability is jeopardized.	No significant impacts.	No effect. No timber potential identified.	Reduced opportunity for income and jobs from oil exploration.
NO WILDERNESS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Some possible impairment of special features if oil and gas development takes place.	No impact.	Some reduction in motorized vehicle recreation due to existing travel restrictions.	Slight negative effect on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation.	Provides short-term protection of important scenic values in eastern portion; potential for degradation of scenic values on remainder.	Potential, long-term adverse impacts of minerals activity on elk and deer habitat and on habitat planned for introduction of bighorn sheep.	No impact on mineral exploration and development.	No impacts.	No effect.	No impact on social and economic situation.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved the use of inholdings and the need to protect important wildlife habitats.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments regarding this WSA were received.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Sixteen comments were received that specifically mentioned the Hidden Pasture Creek WSA. Nine agreed with the nonwilderness recommendation, six favored wilderness designation, and one expressed no clear opinion.

Most of those favoring nonwilderness believed the WSA has low wilderness value and high oil and gas and other mineral potential.

Those favoring wilderness felt the WSA had high wilderness value, particularly in conjunction with adjacent undeveloped national forest lands. Three respondents felt a joint BLM-FS wilderness should be considered.

A partial wilderness alternative that would include most of the WSA as wilderness was proposed by one respondent.

A total of sixteen comments were received on Hidden Pasture Creek WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	16	6	9	0	0	1

Comments Received from State and Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

No comments were received from state and local government or other government agencies that related specifically to the Hidden Pasture Creek WSA.

Summary of Non-Agency Public Comments

Statutory Comments Received for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Statutory comments solicited for consideration until the study phase involved the use of helicopters and the need to protect temperate wildlife habitats.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments regarding this NOA were received.

Comments Received on the Draft WSA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Helena on June 23 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and thirty-five written communications were received in the record.

Sixteen comments were received that specifically mentioned the Hidden Pasture Creek WSA. Nine opted with the nonwilderness recommendation, six favored wilderness designation, and one expressed no clear opinion.

Most of those favoring nonwilderness believed the WSA has low wilderness value and high oil and gas and other mineral potential.

Those favoring wilderness felt the WSA had high wilderness value, particularly in conjunction with adjacent undeveloped national forest lands. Three respondents felt a joint BLM-FS wilderness should be considered.

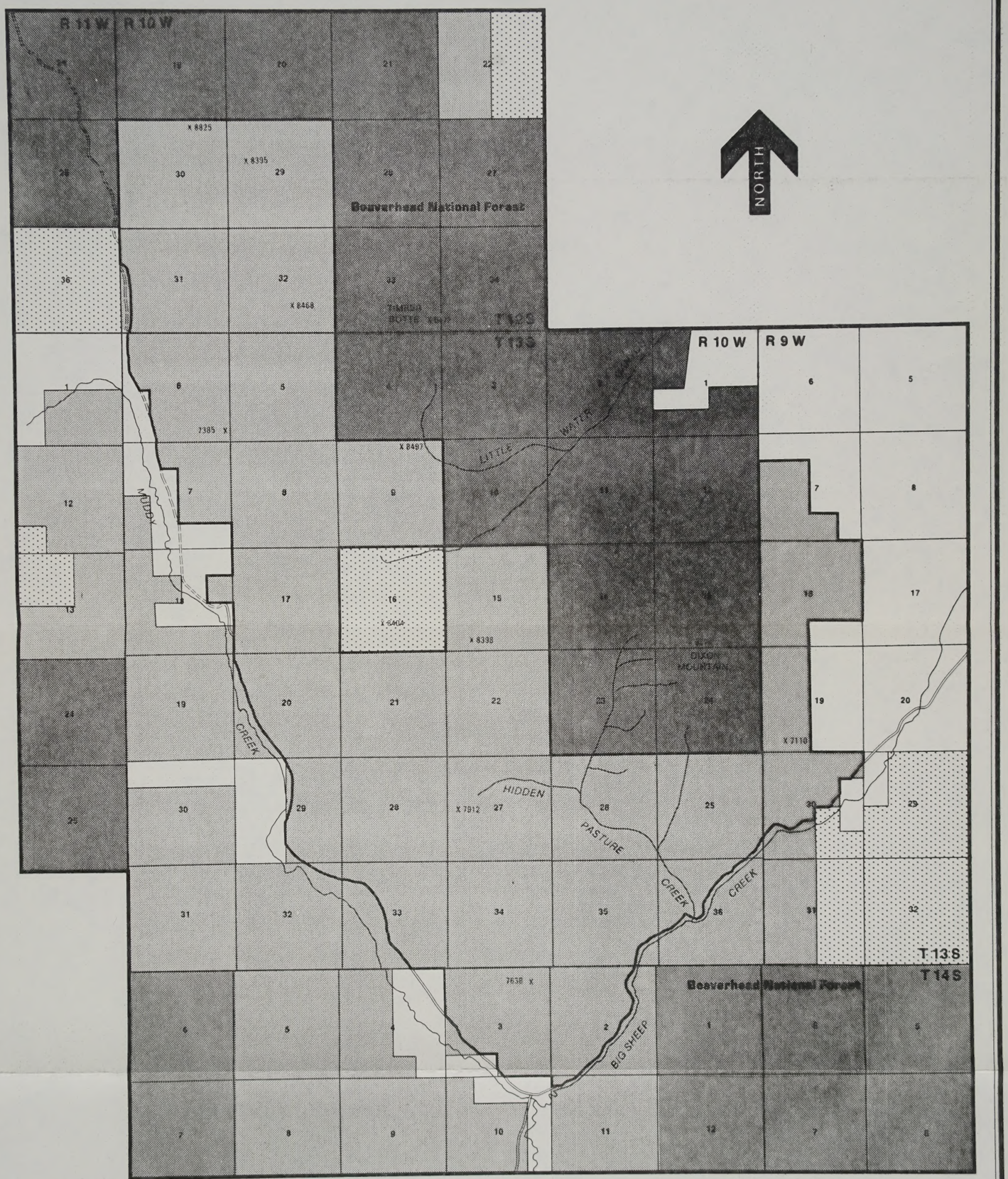
A partial wilderness alternative that would include most of the WSA as wilderness was proposed by one respondent.

A total of sixteen comments were received on Hidden Pasture Creek WSA, as outlined below:

	Total Received	DEIS preferred alternative	DEIS preferred Dillon alternative	Comments supporting less than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation
No. of Comments	16	6	0	0	9	1

Comments Received from State and Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

No comments were received from state and local governments or other government agencies that related specifically to the Hidden Pasture Creek WSA.



HIDDEN PASTURE WSA
MT-076-022

WSA Boundary

BLM

WSA — Non-suitable

Forest Service

State

Private

Paved Road

Dirt Road

0 1 2 3 Miles

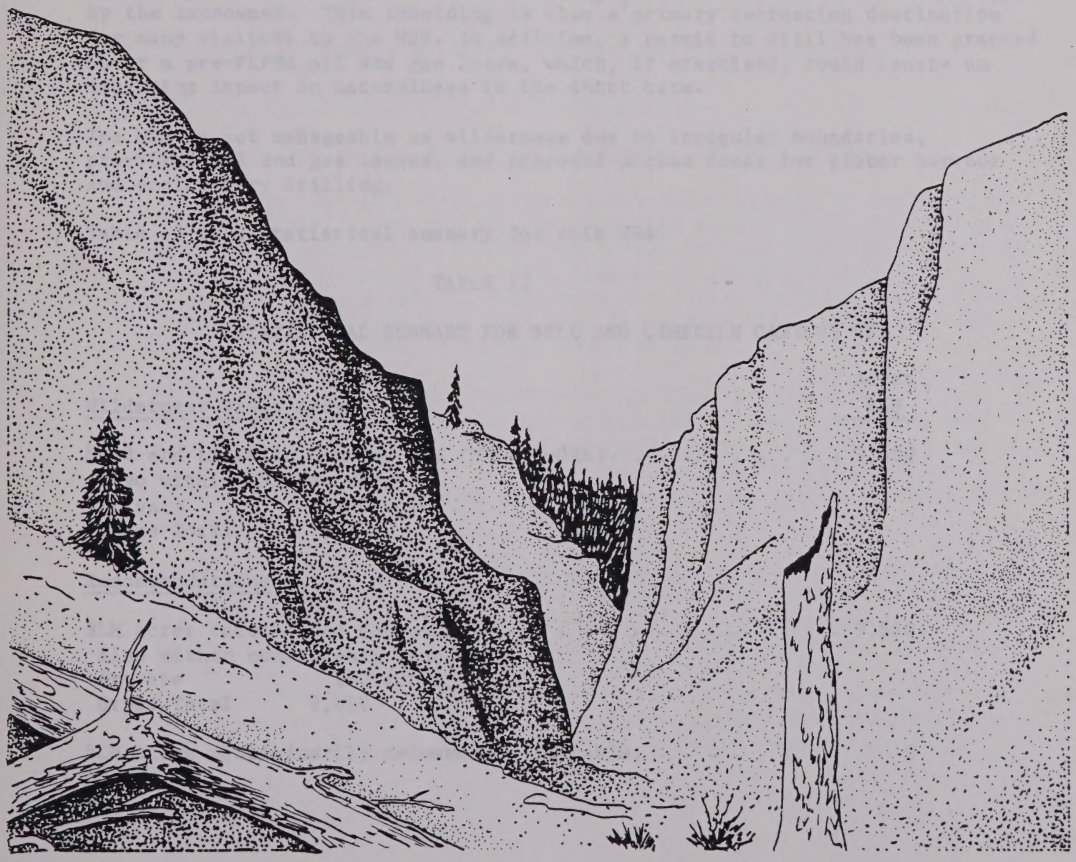
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

YORK

Bell Limekiln Canyons WSA
MT-076-026

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



BELL AND LIMEKILN CANYONS, MT-076-026

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Bell and Limekiln Canyons Wilderness Study Area (WSA) contains 9,650 acres. There is one private inholding of 160 acres. This WSA is being studied under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

The Bell-Limekiln WSA is recommmended as not suitable for wilderness designation. Although the WSA offers relatively high quality scenic values and excellent mule deer range, its extremely poor configuration and irregular boundaries severely limit opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and its naturalness is considered to be of low to moderate quality. These limited wilderness opportunities and the WSA's high oil and gas potential are the major factors in the nonwilderness recommendation.

Another relevant factor is a manageability concern associated with an inholding in Bell Canyon to which a constructed access route has been sought by the landowner. This inholding is also a primary recreation destination for many visitors to the WSA. In addition, a permit to drill has been granted under a pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease, which, if exercised, could create an impairing impact on naturalness in the short term.

The WSA is not manageable as wilderness due to irregular boundaries, pre-PLPMA oil and gas leases, and proposed access roads for timber harvest and exploratory drilling.

Table 12 is a statistical summary for this WSA.

TABLE 12

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR BELL AND LIMEKILN CANYONS WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Bell and Limekiln Canyons WSA (MT-076-026)	9,650
Also within WSA boundary:	
Private 160 acres	
Gross Total 9,810	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	9,650
Also within nonsuitable boundary:	
Private 160 acres	
Gross Total 9,810	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	0

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Bell-Limekiln WSA lies at the north end of the Tendoy Mountains, twenty-five miles southwest of Dillon, Montana. The WSA is shaped somewhat like a mirror-image "L," with a 160-acre inholding of private land in Bell Canyon.

Boundaries

The WSA's boundaries are almost entirely on legal subdivisions.

General Environment

The WSA is a mosaic of grass, sagebrush, and forested ridges, canyons, and slopes. The steep, rugged Bell and Limekiln canyons dominate the topography of the east side of the WSA. The southwestern part of the WSA is dominated to a lesser degree by forks of Deer Canyon and Johnson Gulch. All drainages are seasonally dry except for some springs in Bell Canyon and Limekiln Canyon.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The WSA contains relatively minor impacts on naturalness. The fourteen miles of vehicle ways and more than four miles of fence are distributed throughout the WSA. Two of the vehicle ways and much of the fencing are relatively noticeable because of their location in open terrain, but the dissected topography and forest cover in the canyons provide adequate screening from most impacts in these areas. Impacts from grazing are evident in the canyon bottoms.

Although the imprints are relatively light and well-distributed, a visitor cannot travel for any great distance without contacting some sign of human influence. Although the WSA appears basically natural in character, the cumulative effect of existing imprints of man is a reduction of the quality of the WSA's naturalness, which is rated low to moderate.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The WSA has outstanding opportunities for solitude due to the broken topography and canyon vegetation, and outstanding primitive recreation opportunities provided by its special features. The potential for solitude, however, is limited by the irregular, narrow configuration. Nowhere is the WSA more than three miles wide, and its width narrows to one mile or less in three places. The inholding lies near the center of the WSA. This irregular shape means that some

natural topographic routes of travel between points within the WSA are outside the WSA.

Solitude. Topographic screening is good. Most of the WSA is rugged and well dissected. Canyon walls vary in relief from about 300 feet in the North Fork of Deer Canyon to about 700 feet in Bell Canyon. The large number of smaller tributary drainages also contributes to seclusion.

Vegetative screening within the canyons is excellent. Douglas-fir and tall shrub cover in the canyons provides for visitor seclusion. However, ridges and south slopes are generally open, and visibility is typically great from ridge to ridge across the deep drainages.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Backcountry travel and sightseeing in varied scenery, rock climbing or scrambling, skiing, and snowshoeing are among the recreational opportunities offered by this WSA. Excellent mule deer hunting and good elk hunting also are available.

Primitive recreation opportunities are diverse for the WSA's size; however, its small to moderate size and poor configuration severely limit the quality of these opportunities.

Special Features

Excellent, undisturbed yearlong mule deer habitat is a significant special feature.

"Wedding Ring Rock," also called "Limekiln Arch," is a feature of geological and historical interest. Paleozoic sedimentary rocks of four formations provide other erosional features of interest, such as cliffs, ledges, peaks, talus slopes, caves, and free-standing rock walls. These features, along with the rugged canyons and the mosaic of timbered and open slopes, contribute to high quality scenery.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would aid in the long-term maintenance of important mule deer and, secondarily, elk habitats. Restricting vehicle use would also reduce stress on these species. Restrictions on timber harvesting would ensure the long-term maintenance of security cover. Designation would also protect native vegetation, scenic values, and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities.

This WSA also has potential for the reintroduction of bighorn sheep, although there are no such plans at present. Wilderness designation would ensure the maintenance of this habitat.

Wilderness designation would enhance primitive recreation opportunities and would ensure that the WSA be managed to preserve its outstanding visual resources.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. Douglas-fir forest, sagebrush steppe, and foothills prairie ecosystems are represented in the Bell-Limekiln WSA.

There are examples of the sagebrush steppe type in three units in the wilderness system, and numerous opportunities other than those in this WSA for preservation of additional examples of this ecotype--primarily in relatively large BLM study units in northern Nevada, eastern Oregon, southern Wyoming, and southern Idaho, totalling over four million acres.

The Douglas-fir forest ecosystem is represented in eight designated wilderness areas in Montana alone. The foothills prairie type is currently included in only one designated wilderness. Nine other proposed and further study areas, however, contain this ecosystem, and one BLM WSA area recommended for wilderness in the Dillon WPA/EIS, the Blacktail Mountains, contains a representative area of this type.

Therefore, ecosystem representation is not a major factor affecting the suitability of this WSA, particularly when its relatively low wilderness values are taken into consideration.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. This WSA is within a day's drive of one major population center, Great Falls. However, the designation of the Bell-Limekiln Canyons WSA would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within one day's driving time of Great Falls, because Great Falls is near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this WSA would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region, and would somewhat expand the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of this WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

The WSA would be extremely difficult to manage as wilderness because of its irregular boundary configuration, the presence of valid existing rights, and the private inholding in Bell Canyon. There is an existing application for constructed vehicle access to remove timber from this inholding, which is near the center of the WSA. If it occurred, constructed access and timber harvest would have a major effect on wilderness quality in Bell Canyon, one of the primary attractions in the WSA.

Oil and gas leases covering the northern and central parts of the WSA, including both Limekiln and Bell canyons, were issued before FLPMA, so they do not have wilderness protection stipulations. There is a current application for a permit to drill (APD) on one of the pre-FLPMA leases. The access road proposed for this APD would run through the WSA for about five miles, most of it just upslope from the bordering Johnson Gulch-Deer Canyon road. While these leases are primarily a short-term management problem, some impairment of wilderness values can be expected if the rights under this or other applications to drill are exercised.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Wilderness designation could significantly affect development of this area for oil and gas extraction. The Bell-Limekiln WSA has only limited potential for locatable minerals but has high potential for oil and gas.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. Designation would have a minor adverse effect on existing motorized recreation use, which is relatively light and occurs chiefly during big game hunting season.

Wildlife. Vehicle restrictions could result in an inadequate deer harvest, which would be detrimental to the deer population, but could help reduce stress on deer and elk, particularly when they are on their winter range.

Livestock Grazing. Approximately 1,187 AUMs in five allotments are within the WSA. The prescribed burn proposed for a 400-acre area in the Medicine Lodge Allotment would probably be prohibited if this WSA is designated wilderness. An opportunity to improve range condition, but not to increase AUMs, would be forgone. There would be no impacts to stocking levels, but there would be relatively high possible additional

costs to grazing permittees due to restrictions on the routine use of motor vehicles.

Timber Management. While there are stands of commercial timber in the unit, the present net worth of this timber is negative, making it uneconomical for harvest. Therefore, there would be no impact on timber management.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

Adverse impacts to primitive recreation opportunities, naturalness, and special features such as wildlife habitat and scenic values could occur if significant oil and gas activity, timber harvest, and road construction were to take place in the future. Since the quality of the WSA's wilderness characteristics is only low to moderate, nondesignation would not represent a significant loss to the national wilderness system.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Economic benefits of development of an area with high oil and gas potential could be forgone if the WSA were designated wilderness.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Bell-Limekiln area is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors. The preferred alternative is consistent with the county's policy statement.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Two alternatives were considered for Bell and Limekiln Canyons WSA--All Wilderness (9,650 acres wilderness) and No Wilderness (No Action). An alternative that would consider as wilderness this WSA, the Hidden Pasture Creek WSA, and Beaverhead national forest lands linking these two WSAs was proposed in public comments. These national forest lands were reviewed in the 1978 Beaverhead National Forest land management plan and released from

further wilderness consideration. Prior to this study, in February 1981, the BLM approached FS officials on the question of a joint study, and it was revealed that FS policy is to not reconsider previous wilderness decisions in its first generation forest plans. Therefore, no national forest lands were included in the scope of this study.

Table 13 is a summary of potential impacts for the two alternatives that were fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The No Wilderness Alternative is the preferred alternative. Current management direction consists of the following:

protection for Wedding Ring Rock as a feature of geological interest

and restrictions on changes in visual resources.

Monitoring and Enforcement

When the area is released from wilderness consideration, existing regulations and policies will guide management of the area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Intensive inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved mineral potential of the WSA, offsite sights and sounds, the need to study the area in conjunction with national forest lands, and benefits of wilderness designation to wildlife.

Comments from the Related Planning Effort

No comments regarding this WSA were received.

Comments Received on the Draft EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Table 13

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

BELL AND LIMEKILN CANYONS

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (9,806 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for three major ecosystems, with foothills prairie dominant. Some wilderness values relatively low. Contains important special scenic and wildlife features.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Possible impairment due to existing prior rights for minerals. Boundaries irregular. One inholding would exist.	Slight to moderate reduction in motorized use associated with hunting due to discontinued availability of 14 miles of vehicle ways.	Anticipated slight potential for improvement in quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreational use.	Ensures long-term protection of existing outstanding scenic values.	Ensures long-term maintenance of security cover for deer and elk; moderate potential for long-term increases in mule deer populations coupled with potential harvest problems.	No major impacts on availability of lands for exploration and development except for oil and gas where long-term availability is jeopardized.	Opportunity forgone for prescribed burn of 400 acres, but overall minor impact.	No short-term impacts. Long-term loss in harvest potential of 0.45 mmbf/decade. Not currently economical to harvest.	Reduced opportunity for income and jobs from oil exploration.
NO WILDERNESS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Some impairment of primitive qualities and special features if oil and gas development, road construction take place. Wilderness values forgone are of low value.	No impact.	No impact.	Slight negative effect on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation.	Moderate potential for degradation of present values.	Potential for long-term adverse impacts on security cover for deer and elk. Slight potential for long-term decrease in big game numbers.	No impact on mineral development and production.	No impacts.	No impact.	No impact on social and economic situation.

Fifteen comments were received that specifically mentioned the Bell-Limekiln WSA. Eight agreed with the nonwilderness recommendation, six favored wilderness designation, and one expressed no clear opinion.

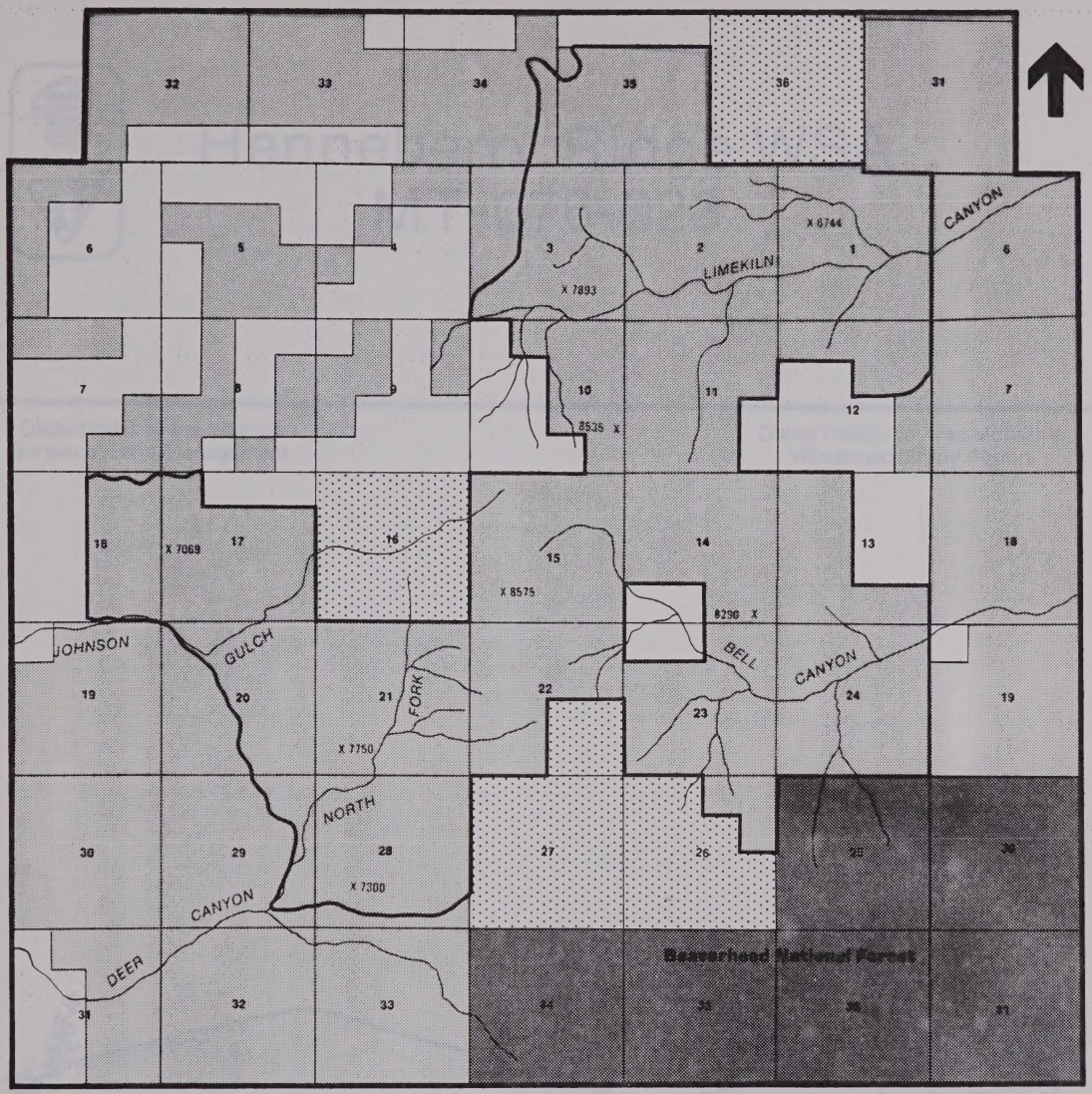
Most of those favoring nonwilderness believed the WSA has low wilderness qualities. One comment mentioned oil and gas potential in the WSA. Those favoring wilderness designation for the WSA believed it has high wilderness value, especially when considered with adjacent undeveloped national forest lands. Three respondents felt a joint BLM-FS wilderness should be considered.

A total of fifteen comments were received on Bell and Limekiln Canyons WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	15	6	8	0	0	1

Comments Received from State and Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

No comments were received from state and local governments and other government agencies.



BELL LIMEKILN CANYON WSA
MT-076-026

WSA Boundary

BLM

WSA — Non-suitable

Forest Service

State

Private

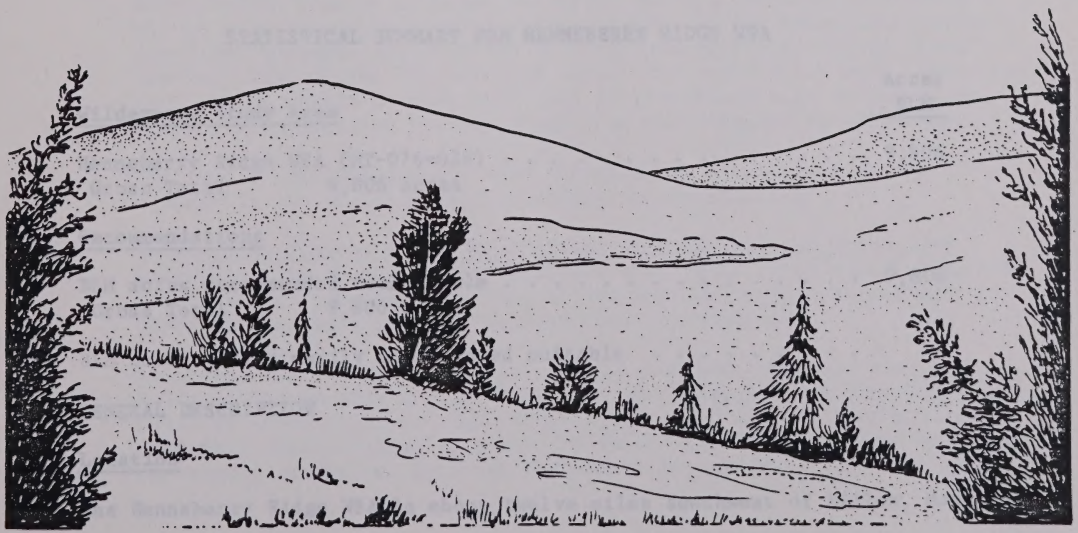
0 1 2 3 Miles

0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

Henneberry Ridge WSA
MT-076-028

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



HENNEBERRY RIDGE, MT-076-028

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Henneberry Ridge WSA contains 9,806 acres. This area is being studied under authority of Section 603 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

Henneberry Ridge is recommended as not suitable for wilderness designation. The major factors considered in this recommendation are the relatively limited wilderness values and conflicts with livestock grazing management. Under wilderness management a complex of range improvements necessary to the implementation of the Rocky Hills AMP would be prohibited and an increase of 611 AUMs per year and an opportunity to improve 5,400 acres in critical erosion condition while maintaining livestock grazing would be forgone. The area's wilderness values are not considered sufficient to offset the grazing management opportunities forgone.

Designating an area of 5,545 acres in the central and eastern portion of the WSA was considered in the study, excluding from wilderness an area with gold and silver potential and an area proposed for prescribed burning, which would not be allowed under wilderness management. However, designating only this area would reduce significantly the size and diversity of the area recommended for wilderness, and the conflict with livestock grazing would remain.

The WSA is not manageable as wilderness due to its poor configuration, small size, and pre-FLPMA development rights.

Table 14 is a statistical summary for this WSA.

TABLE 14

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR HENNEBERRY RIDGE WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Henneberry Ridge WSA (MT-076-028)	9,806
Gross Total 9,806 acres	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	9,806
Gross Total 9,806 acres	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	0

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Henneberry Ridge WSA is about twelve miles southwest of Dillon, Montana;

about five miles north of Clark Canyon Reservoir; and just south of the historic town of Bannack.

Boundaries

The WSA is roughly rectangular, about six miles long from northwest to southeast and one to four miles wide.

More than half the unit's boundary is formed by the boundaries of state and private land; there are intrusions of state land on the east and southwest. Natural and man-made features--Grasshopper Creek, a power line, vehicle ways, and fence lines--form a little less than half the boundary (see the Henneberry Ridge WSA map).

General Environment

The WSA is characterized by an open, well-dissected sagebrush prairie immediately south of Grasshopper Creek. Higher ridges on the south and west are partially timbered with Douglas-fir and limber pine.

The WSA contains parts of two major drainages and most of Madigan Gulch, which runs from south to north through the center of the WSA. In the prairie portion of the WSA are a central bench and a maze of small peaks, ridges, and drainages that lead north toward Grasshopper Creek.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The area identified as a WSA has only minor, substantially unnoticeable impacts of human activity. The WSA contains just under eleven miles of vehicle ways, short sections of gap fence, and three developed springs. All evidence of human occupation is within about one-half mile of the WSA boundary except for two vehicle ways. These two ways, which appear to have been used to distribute salt to livestock, are indistinguishable in many places, so their impact is very light.

The core of the WSA appears very natural; the naturalness of the WSA as a whole is one of its most outstanding characteristics.

Outstanding Opportunities For Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Opportunities for solitude were found to be outstanding due to the rugged topography in most of the WSA. Primitive recreation opportunities were found to be less than outstanding.

Solitude. This broken topography offers excellent opportunities for solitude for an area of this size, and the potential for dispersion and mobility of visitors is high. However, there is only minimal screening from vegetation available, primarily in the partially timbered southern and western portions. External influences are minimal.

Irregular boundaries result from state ownership along the east and southwest edges of the study area. These boundaries limit the core of the WSA, where the best opportunitities for solitude are available, to about 6,000 acres.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The main primitive recreation attractions are year-round cross-country hiking and horseback riding and seasonal hunting for antelope and mule deer. Scenery from the higher ridges is attractive, and the topographic diversity is outstanding for an area of this size.

The WSA's size and the lack of surface water would limit visits to short visits or brief overnight stays. Travel in the core of the WSA, with its maze of ridges and drainages, is moderately challenging. Overall, recreation opportunities are neither very diverse nor particularly outstanding, but recreation opportunities are generally scarce in natural-appearing grassland types.

Special Features

The WSA provides important year-round habitat for mule deer and good to excellent antelope habitat. There is some elk winter range in the WSA. Scenic values, particularly scenic erosional remnants of sedimentary rocks along the southern and western ridges, are a moderately important special feature.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would aid in the long-term maintenance of important deer, antelope, and elk habitats. Key deer and elk winter range on the south and west portions of the WSA would be protected over the long term. Restricting vehicle use would also reduce stress on these species. Designation would also protect native vegetation (sagebrush), scenic values, and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities. Habitat for nongame birds is abundant and will be maintained along Grasshopper Creek.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. The only ecosystem of a viable size that is represented is the sagebrush steppe ecosystem.

There are examples of the sagebrush steppe type in three units in the wilderness system, and numerous opportunities other than those in this study for preservation of additional examples of this ecotype--in relatively large BLM study units in northern Nevada, eastern Oregon,

southern Wyoming, and southern Idaho, totalling over four million acres. Therefore, ecosystem representation is not a major factor affecting the suitability of Henneberry Ridge WSA.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The Henneberry Ridge WSA is within five hours of Great Falls. However, the designation of Henneberry Ridge would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within one day's driving time of Great Falls. Because Great Falls is near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this WSA would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region and would expand somewhat the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of the Henneberry Ridge WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

This WSA would be difficult to manage as wilderness because of relatively poor configuration, small size, and the existence of valid existing oil and gas rights. Areas on the east and west would present management difficulties due to narrow configuration. On the south, the location of a small portion of the WSA on a slope facing extensive nonwilderness lands and irregular legal Boundaries are also potential problems. Pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases would raise long-term manageability questions, although currently the possibility of major developmental impacts appears low.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Exploration of lands with high potential for gold, some potential for silver, and limited potential for phosphate, oil, and gas may be significantly impacted if the entire WSA is designated as wilderness. The partial wilderness designation would not include the land having high potential for gold. The impact on the other substances would be less than the All Wilderness alternative.

There is good potential for small deposits of gold and silver in the northwest portion of the WSA and for placer gold along Grasshopper Creek along the northern boundary. Although the WSA is covered by oil and gas

leases, mostly pre-FLPMA, oil and gas potential appears limited. Development of the approximately sixteen mining claims and the oil and gas leases could be adversely affected by wilderness designation.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. The limited motorized recreation opportunities in the WSA would be forgone. However, this would not enhance the limited primitive recreation opportunities.

Livestock Grazing. The proposed prescribed burn for the Rocky Hills Allotment would probably be prohibited if the area were designated wilderness. The AMP could be implemented without the burn, but an increase of approximately thirty livestock AUMs per year would be forgone.

The proposed complex of improvements in the Rocky Hills Allotment, consisting of a well and windmill, three miles of pipeline, nine troughs, and three miles of fence to separate pastures, would likely be prohibited due to cumulative impacts in the core area of the WSA if it were designated wilderness. These improvements are critical to implementation of the alternate rest grazing system proposed for the allotment, and no reasonable substitutes for them, which would have less of an impact on wilderness values, are possible. Without the proposed management system, a long-term increase of 611 AUMs per year would be forgone, and the 5,400 acres of the allotment in critical erosion condition would probably not improve significantly.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

The WSA's primary wilderness value--as a natural prairie or steppe--would very likely be impaired by the proposed range improvements and possibly by any future oil and gas activity if it took place in the central portion of the WSA. Oil and gas activity and possibly livestock grazing could also adversely affect the supplementary value of wildlife habitat in the WSA. There are other qualified candidates for the wilderness system which could represent a natural-appearing sagebrush steppe, although the core area of the WSA is a good example.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

leases, mostly pre-FLPMA, oil and gas potential appears limited. Development of the approximately sixteen mining claims and the oil and gas leases could be adversely affected by wilderness designation.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. The limited motorized recreation opportunities in the WSA would be forgone. However, this would not enhance the limited primitive recreation opportunities.

Livestock Grazing. The proposed prescribed burn for the Rocky Hills allotment would probably be permitted if the area were designated wilderness. The AMP could be implemented without the burn, but an increase of approximately thirty livestock AUMs per year would be forgone.

The perceived benefits or improvements in the Rocky Hills allotment, consisting of a well and windmill, three miles of pipeline, nine troughs, and three miles of fence to separate pastures, would likely be precluded due to cumulative impacts in the core area of the WSA if it were designated wilderness. These improvements are critical to implementation of the alternate rest grazing system proposed for the allotment, and no reasonable substitutes for them, which would have less of an impact on wilderness values, are possible. Without the proposed improvement system, a long-term increase of 111 AUMs per year would be forgone, and the 3,500 acres of the allotment in critical riparian condition would probably not improve significantly.

Impacts of Designation on Wilderness Values

The WSA's primary wilderness value--as a natural prairie or steppe--would very likely be impaired by the proposed range improvements and possibly by any future oil and gas activity if it took place in the central portion of the WSA. Oil and gas activity and possibly livestock grazing could also adversely affect the supplementary values of wildlife habitat in the WSA. There are other qualified candidates for the wilderness system which could represent a natural-appearing steppe, although the core area of the WSA is a good example.

Public Comments

This appendix is covered under the section entitled Summary of Nine-Quarter Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Economic benefits of development of gold and silver deposits in the north and northwest parts of the study area could be forgone if the WSA were designated wilderness.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Henneberry Ridge WSA is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state, or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors. The preferred alternative is consistent with the county's policy statement.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Three alternatives were considered for Henneberry Ridge WSA--All Wilderness (9,806 acres wilderness), No Wilderness (No Action), and Partial Wilderness (5,545 acres wilderness and 4,261 acres nonwilderness). Table 15 is a summary of potential impacts for each alternative.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable with the exception of the restriction it would place on resolving the erosion situation.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The No Wilderness Alternative is the preferred alternative. This alternative would benefit the soils/watershed resource by reducing erosion hazard over a large area, both within and outside the study area.

All feasible mitigating measures to prevent unnecessary environmental degradation will be applied to future management actions through the environmental analysis process.

Monitoring and Enforcement

When the area is released from wilderness consideration, existing regulations and policies will guide management of the area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

Table 15

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

HENNEBERRY RIDGE

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (9,806 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for area with predominant sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Contains important special wildlife habitat features. Some wilderness values relatively low.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Boundaries irregular. Relatively small size. Potential impairment in the short term due to minerals users.	Slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 11 miles of highly traveled vehicle ways.	Anticipated very slight improvement in quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreational use.	Ensures long-term protection of existing moderate scenic values.	Ensures long-term protection of key winter range for deer and elk; long-term protection of habitat for species dependent on sagebrush, with maintenance of existing population levels.	May have significant impact on availability for exploration of lands with high potential for gold, some potential for silver, and limited potential for phosphate and oil and gas.	Opportunity forgone for prescribed burn; major impact on proposed range improvements. Opportunity for increased livestock forage, estimated 641 AUMs over the long term, would be forgone.	No effect. No timber potential identified.	Reduced opportunity for creation of income and jobs from mining.
NO WILDERNESS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Likely impairment of the area's highly natural character from proposed range improvements and mineral activity.	No impact.	No impact.	Slight negative effect on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation.	Potential for degradation of existing values.	Potential adverse long-term impacts on important big game winter range; potential for long-term decrease in big game populations.	No impact on mineral exploration and development.	No impact.	No effect.	No impact on social and economic situation.
PARTIAL WILDERNESS (5,545 acres)	Same as All Wilderness except contains lesser wilderness values and lesser special wildlife habitat features. Near minimum size.	Minor potential for future manageability problems. Possible land exchange.	Slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 7 miles of vehicle ways.	Same as All Wilderness.	Ensures long-term protection of values for portion recommended.	Ensures long-term protection for only a portion of key winter range for deer and elk.	May impact the availability for exploration of lands for gold, silver, oil and gas, and phosphate on areas of lesser potential. No impact on availability of lands with highest potential for gold.	Major impacts on proposed range improvements. 641 AUM increase forgone.	No effect.	Less of a reduction in opportunity to create income and jobs from mining. The highest potential mining areas are outside the partial wilderness.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved the area's mineral potential and effects of designation on grazing permittees.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments were received on the Dillon MFP that related to the Henneberry Ridge WSA.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

A total of eighteen responses specifically mentioned the Henneberry Ridge WSA. Ten comments supported the nonwilderness proposal, six favored wilderness, and two expressed no clear opinion.

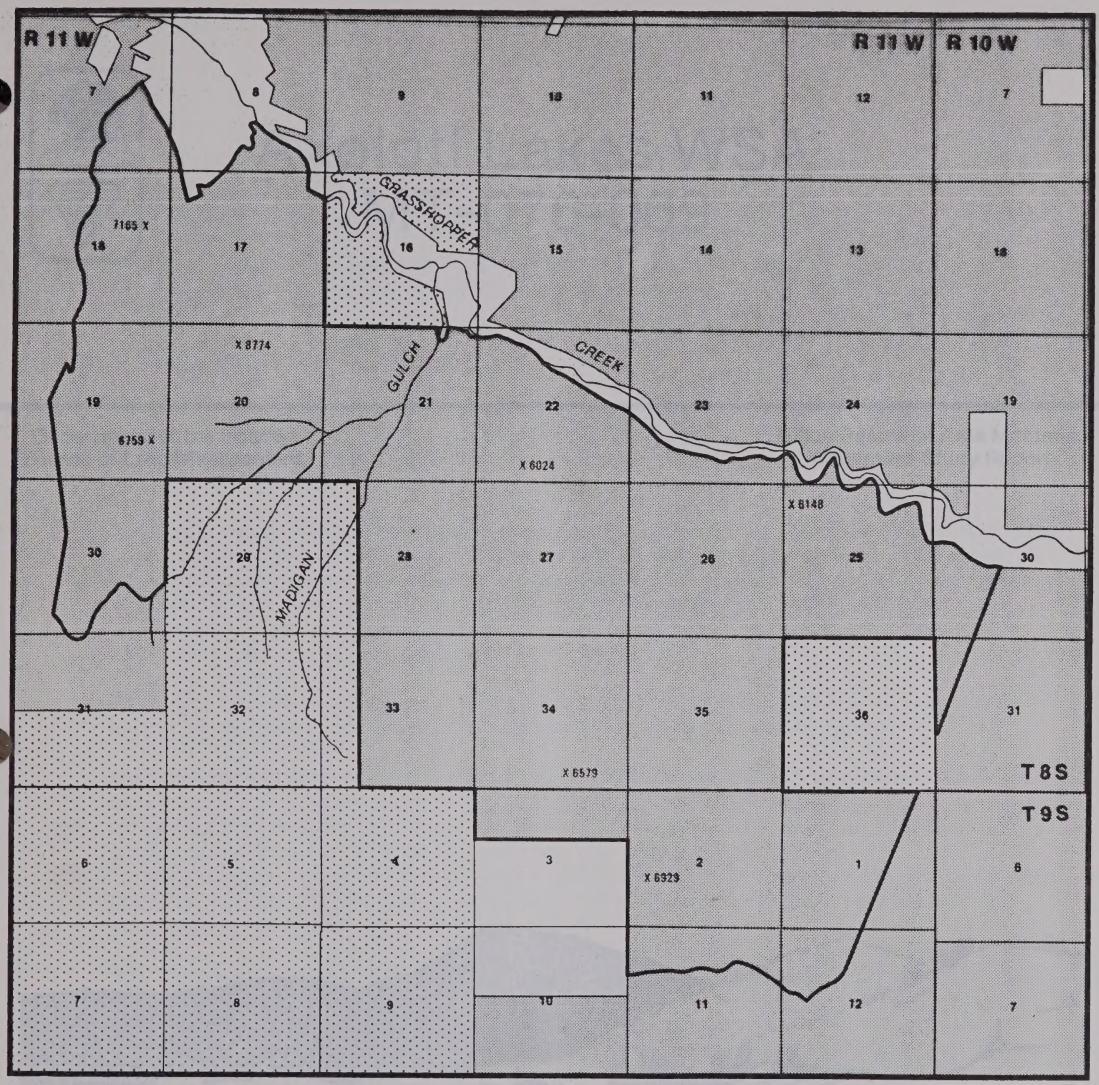
Those favoring nonwilderness believed the area has low wilderness quality and high mineral potential. Respondents favoring wilderness designation believed the area would add significantly to the diversity of the wilderness system, and that the area has wilderness qualities.

A total of eighteen comments were received on Henneberry Ridge WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	18	6	10	0	0	2

Comments Received from State and Local Governments or Other Government Agencies

No comments were received from state or local governments or other government agencies that related specifically to the Henneberry Ridge WSA.



HENNEBERRY RIDGE WSA
MT-076-028

WSA Boundary

State

BLM

Private

WSA — Non-suitable

0 1 2 3 Miles

0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

Axolotl Lakes WSA
MT-076-069

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report

AXOLOTL LAKES, MT-076-069

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Axolotl Lakes WSA contains 7,804 acres with 24 acres in two private inholdings. This WSA is being studied under authority of Section 603 of FLMPA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

The Axolotl Lakes WSA is recommended as not suitable for wilderness designation. The WSA has significant scenic values, wildlife features, and a diversity of primitive recreation opportunities. However, imprints of man present in the WSA reduce quality of the wilderness resource significantly.

Under wilderness designation, resource values forgone would be the relatively important motorized recreation use, full development of an area with high potential for gold, and long-term opportunities for a harvest of about two million board feet of timber per decade. In addition, there would be relatively high additional costs to livestock operations due to possible restrictions on the use of motor vehicles.

Overall, the WSA's wilderness qualities are not sufficient to offset other resource values that would be forgone by wilderness designation.

Short-term management consists of restrictions on timber and minerals activities in a portion of the WSA (2,200 acres), motorized travel restrictions to protect wildlife and watershed values, and a grazing exclusion around Blue Lake to protect the axolotl, a unique, nonmetamorphosing form of the tiger salamander. This management protects the special values in the lakes area, but allows timber harvest and mineral activity in the rest of the WSA.

The current land use plan calls for most of the WSA to be considered as an ACEC for its wildlife, watershed, and recreation values. At this time, current management is considered adequate to protect the WSA's special features without special status. It may be considered for designation as an ACEC at a later date, if there is a change in any of the management components or if the target values are considered threatened.

The WSA is not manageable as wilderness due to its poor configuration, two inholdings, mining claims, and easy ORV access.

Table 16 is a statistical summary for this WSA.

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 85, OC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225

TABLE 16

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR AXOLOTL LAKES WSA

Wilderness Study Area	Acres BLM
Axolotl Lakes WSA (MT-076-069)	7,804
Also within WSA boundary:	
Private 24 acres	
Gross Total 7,828	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	7,804
Also within nonsuitable boundary:	
Private 24 acres	
Gross Total 7,828	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	0

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

Axolotl Lakes WSA is at the north end of the Gravelly Range about three miles southeast of Virginia City, Montana.

Boundaries

The WSA is roughly rectangular, about three miles by four miles. Except for a fraction of a mile on the north, where a boundary is formed by a county road, all boundaries of this WSA are on legal subdivisions. There are two inholdings--small patented mining claims totaling about twenty-four acres in the northwest corner of the unit.

General Environment

The WSA is in the transition area between the high hills of the Gravelly Range and the lower, open foothills between the valleys of the Ruby and Madison rivers. The terrain and vegetation are unusually varied for so small an area.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Characteristics

Naturalness. Open, rolling meadows with sagebrush and grasses predominate at the north end of the unit, with aspen groves in small drainages and basins. Mixed conifer forests with interspersed meadows

occur above the sage-grassland zone. In the south, there are subalpine forests with subalpine fir, whitebark pine, and alpine meadows.

There are many small drainages and basins in the northern part of the WSA. The basins, of glacial origin, contain several pothole lakes. Most of the lakes are small, but Upper Axolotl Lake and Blue Lake are relatively large. The unique axolotl salamander, for which the area is named, inhabits Blue Lake.

Although there are significant signs of man in the WSA, its topographic and vegetative diversity act to reinforce a sense of naturalness. In addition, some of the vehicle ways could probably be returned to a natural condition with motor vehicle travel restrictions.

Among other signs of man are twenty miles of vehicle ways and about sixteen and one-half miles of fence. Cabin ruins, ruins of a gold mill, evidence of logging, developed springs, and a repeater tower are also present. Only about five miles of the vehicle ways in the vicinity of Axolotl and Blue Lakes could be expected to rehabilitate naturally. A constructed vehicle route to one of the inholdings and a vehicle way through the center of the unit, over which cattle are trailed, are significant individual impacts.

A visitor could not travel a significant distance in the unit without encountering several impacts on naturalness. Overall, the naturalness of this WSA is rather low.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The diversity of landforms and vegetation provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and a wide range of high quality recreation opportunities contribute to outstanding recreation potential.

Solitude. This WSA's local relief enhances opportunities for solitude, especially in the western part. Terrain in about 25% of the WSA is rolling and somewhat dissected; the rest is well-dissected. About half the WSA is forested; the other half contains a variety of open country--rolling foothills and basins, steep south slopes, and high plateaus and peaks ranging from 8,300 to 9,300 feet in elevation.

Opportunities for solitude are good for an area of this size, although the lack of coherent topographic or physiographic boundaries, especially on the south and east, limits the size of the area in which solitude may be found. The irregular boundaries severely limit the number of natural routes of travel, such as along drainages and ridges, that are entirely within the WSA. The WSA's configuration also limits the opportunities somewhat in the northern and eastern fingers and along the western edge; however, the varied topography, frequent stands of timber, and interspersed meadows and open high country provide secluded spots for visitors in much of the WSA.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Opportunities for primitive recreation are diverse and excellent. The terrain is ideal for horseback

riding, cross-country hiking, and backpacking; and the scenery and varied habitats provide excellent opportunities for photography and nature study. Most of the WSA offers excellent cross-country skiing and winter camping. Some lakes are stocked with cutthroat and rainbow trout, so they provide good fishing.

Deer, antelope, elk, and raptor habitats offer good opportunities for wildlife observation. Hunting for elk, deer, moose, antelope, and grouse is available.

Special Features

This WSA is listed in the National Directory of Research Natural Areas. In 1972, a 1,520-acre area around the lakes was recommended as an "Outstanding Natural Area" by the BLM in the course of planning for the area, but no formal designation was ever made.

The axolotl, which is indigenous to the WSA, is a unique, nonmetamorphosing form of the tiger salamander. It is listed as a species of interest or concern by the state of Montana and is of scientific and educational interest.

Cultural values associated with the WSA are considered high. Prehistoric occupation, ceremonial sites, and mass game kill sites have been identified in a small sample of the WSA. Historic mine and mill sites are evident in the west end of the WSA.

Scenic views of the surrounding mountain ranges are a moderate supplemental value. The unusually varied terrain and vegetation are significant scenic features.

The lake fisheries are important, although they are limited by lack of spawning habitat. There is a potential for the introduction of grayling.

Wildlife features include spring-summer-fall range for antelope, elk, mule deer, and moose.

Overall, the WSA's special features are unique and outstanding.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would provide long-term protection for the unique wildlife values of this area. Current management direction provides protection for the axolotl salamander through motor vehicle restrictions and the exclusion of livestock grazing around Blue Lake. Wilderness designation would guarantee the continuation of this protection over the long term. The prohibition of timber harvesting would protect security cover for deer and elk and avoid disturbances which could cause a disruption in movement and use patterns.

Restrictions on mineral development would have a beneficial effect on wildlife by protecting existing security cover and wildlife use patterns.

Restricting vehicle access would reduce stress on elk, mule deer, and antelope. Designation would aid in the long-term maintenance of important cultural resources and would also protect native vegetation and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities.

Primitive recreation opportunities would benefit from wilderness designtion, and the entire WSA would be managed to preserve it's outstanding scenic values.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, insures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. Douglas-fir forest and foothills prairie ecosystems are represented in the Axolotl Lakes WSA.

Representation of the Douglas-fir type is not a major concern, as it is already represented in eight wilderness areas in Montana alone. The foothills prairie type is currently somewhat underrepresented in the wilderness system.

One area recommended for wilderness in the Dillon WPA/EIS, the Blacktail Mountains, contains a representative area of this type. Therefore, the potential for additional representation in the Axolotl Lakes WSA is not sufficient to offset other potential resource uses under nonwilderness.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The Axolotl Lakes WSA is within five hour's driving time of two major population centers--Billings and Great Falls. However, the designation of the Axolotl Lakes would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within one day's driving time of these two cities because they are near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. Within five hours of Billings there are five designated wilderness areas totaling 2,007,274 acres, twenty-seven presidentially endorsed areas totaling 1,449,062 acres, and forty further study areas totaling 1,024,627 acres. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this area as wilderness would not be nationally or regionally significant.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area

in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of this WSA would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

This WSA cannot be effectively managed for wilderness purposes because of relatively poor configuration, inholdings, an existing vehicle access route, and mining claims in the western portion of the WSA. The two small inholdings are patented mining claims and are located in the northwest corner of the WSA. The constructed access route goes to one of these parcels, crossing the northern part of the WSA for about two miles. A boundary adjustment could be made to exclude these parcels, which would reduce the size of the WSA by about 500 acres.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Exploration of land with good potential for gold and limited potential for oil and gas may be significantly impacted if the area is designated as wilderness.

There is high potential for gold in the western portion of the WSA, which is in the Virginia City Mining District. Roughly 15% of the area is in this category. Development of any commercial deposits in this portion would be adversely affected by wilderness designation.

Impacts on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soils, or water resources.

Recreation. Wilderness designation would have an adverse effect on existing motorized recreation uses, including snowmobiling and wheeled vehicle use for hunting and fishing access. About 7.5 miles of vehicle ways are seasonally open under the existing travel plan, and the entire area is open to snowmobile use.

Livestock Grazing. There are portions of four allotments with a total of 686 AUMs within the WSA. There would be no significant impacts to range improvements or stocking levels under wilderness designation, but there could be relatively high additional operating costs due to motor vehicle restrictions.

Timber Management. The potential sustained yield harvest from this WSA is about 2.8 MMBF/decade, with a present net worth of $390,000 at a 4% discount rate and $40,000 at 7 3/8%.

Over the short term, approximately 2,200 acres of this area are closed

to timber harvesting to protect wildlife, watershed, and recreation values. Over the long term, however, the 2.8 MMBF/ decade potential harvest would be forgone if the area were designated wilderness.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

Continued current management direction would substantially retain, and to a degree improve, wilderness characteristics and special features in the northeastern one-third of the WSA in the vicinity of the lakes. However, it is likely that timber removal south of the lakes area and mining in the western portion would result in adverse impacts to wilderness qualities. Long-term management is uncertain, but could impair these values if considerable development were to take place. The WSA may be considered as an ACEC at a later date if the WSA's special features are threatened.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Economic benefits of development of timber resources and an area of high potential for gold could be forgone if the WSA were designated wilderness.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Madison County Comprehensive Plan recognizes agriculture and tourism-recreation as the two mainstays of the Madison County economy. Positive factors influencing recreation's contribution are the proximity to Yellowstone Park, the blue ribbon status of area trout streams, and "an abundance of scenic natural areas." One of the areas listed as a scenic natural area is Axolotl Lakes.

Mining is mentioned as a potentially positive factor for county employment as the economic feasibility of mineral extraction improves. There appear to be no inconsistencies between the formal county plan and this proposal, as the study has incorporated the relevant factors.

WSA ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Two alternatives were considered for Axolotl Lakes WSA--All Wilderness (7,804 acres wilderness) and No Wilderness (No Action). Two new alternatives were proposed for the WSA during the comment period. One would recommend about 6,500 acres as wilderness, excluding the high mineral potential area on the west. This alternative was considered, but the remaining conflict with timber management, combined with the low value of naturalness and current management

direction to protect the unique values in the lakes area, would still result in a nonwilderness recommendation.

The other alternative mentioned in comments is to designate the WSA as an ACEC. It is considered that current management, including restrictions on surface mineral activity, timber harvest, and grazing in part of the WSA, as well as motorized vehicle travel restrictions, are adequate to protect the WSA's special features. Axolotl Lakes may be considered as an ACEC at a later date if there is a change in any of the management components or if the target values are considered to be threatened.

Table 17 is a summary of potential impacts for the two alternatives that were fully analyzed.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The No Wilderness alternative is the preferred alternative. Current management direction for the Axolotl Lakes WSA consists of the following:

recommendation of 5,440 acres as an ACEC for its wildlife, watershed, and recreation values;

restrictions on timber harvest on 2,200 acres in the northeastern portion of the lakes area;

restrictions on surface occupancy on leasable mineral claims on 2,200 acres in the northeastern portion of the lakes area;

restrictions on vehicle travel to protect wildlife habitat and watershed values;

exclusion areas around Blue Lake for livestock grazing; and

restrictions on change in scenic values in the lakes area.

Monitoring and Enforcement

If the WSA is released from wilderness consideration, as proposed, existing regulations and policies will guide management of this WSA to insure that unncessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Intensive Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Intensive inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved the effects of wilderness designation on livestock grazing

Table 17

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

AXOLOTL LAKES

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (7,804 acres)	Provides wilderness protection for area containing four ecosystems, predominantly Douglas-fir. Some wilderness values relatively low. Contains special wildlife habitat features.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Boundaries irregular. Existance of mining claims. Two inholdings would exist. Potential problems with elimination of current vehicle access.	Significant reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 7.5 miles of vehicle ways and prohibition of snowmobiling.	Moderate potential for improvement in quantity and quality nonmotorized recreation.	Ensures long-term protection of outstanding scenic values.	Ensures long-term protection for unique wildlife values, fisheries values, and deer and elk security cover. Moderate potential to enhance recreational hunting in the long term.	May have significant impact on the availability for exploration of lands with good potential for gold, and limited potential for oil and gas.	No significant impacts.	Short-term and long-term loss in harvest potential of 2.8 mmbf/decade.	Reduced opportunity for income and jobs from mining and timber harvest. Timber potential equates to 1.7 jobs per year.
NO WILDERNESS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Lakes area likely to retain natural character. Mining, timber harvest could impair values in part of area.	No impact.	Some reductions in motorized recreation due to current restrictions.	Slighty negative effects on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation.	Provides short-term protection of outstanding scenic values in lakes area; potential for degradation of values in remainder of area.	Provides short-term protection for most important habitat values. Provides short-term protection for only a portion of important elk range.	No impact on mineral exploration and development.	No impacts.	Short-term and possible long-term loss of 1.5 mmbf/decade under current management.	No impact on the social and economic situation.

operations and on development of timber and mineral resources, and the benefits of wilderness to important wildlife habitats.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

Comments received on Axolotl Lakes either favored or opposed road closures and/or ACEC designation for the area.

Comments on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Seventeen comments were received on Axolotl Lakes WSA. Six supported the preferred alternative, No Wilderness. Eight favored wilderness designation, and three favored designation as an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC).

Those favoring nonwilderness felt generally that the WSA lacked sufficient quality to overcome resource conflicts. One comment mentioned mineral potential and one favored allowing a full range of uses under nonwilderness management rather than designation as an ACEC.

Respondents who favored wilderness designation felt the WSA has special biological and natural features that should be preserved. Two mentioned that timber harvest would not be compatible with these features.

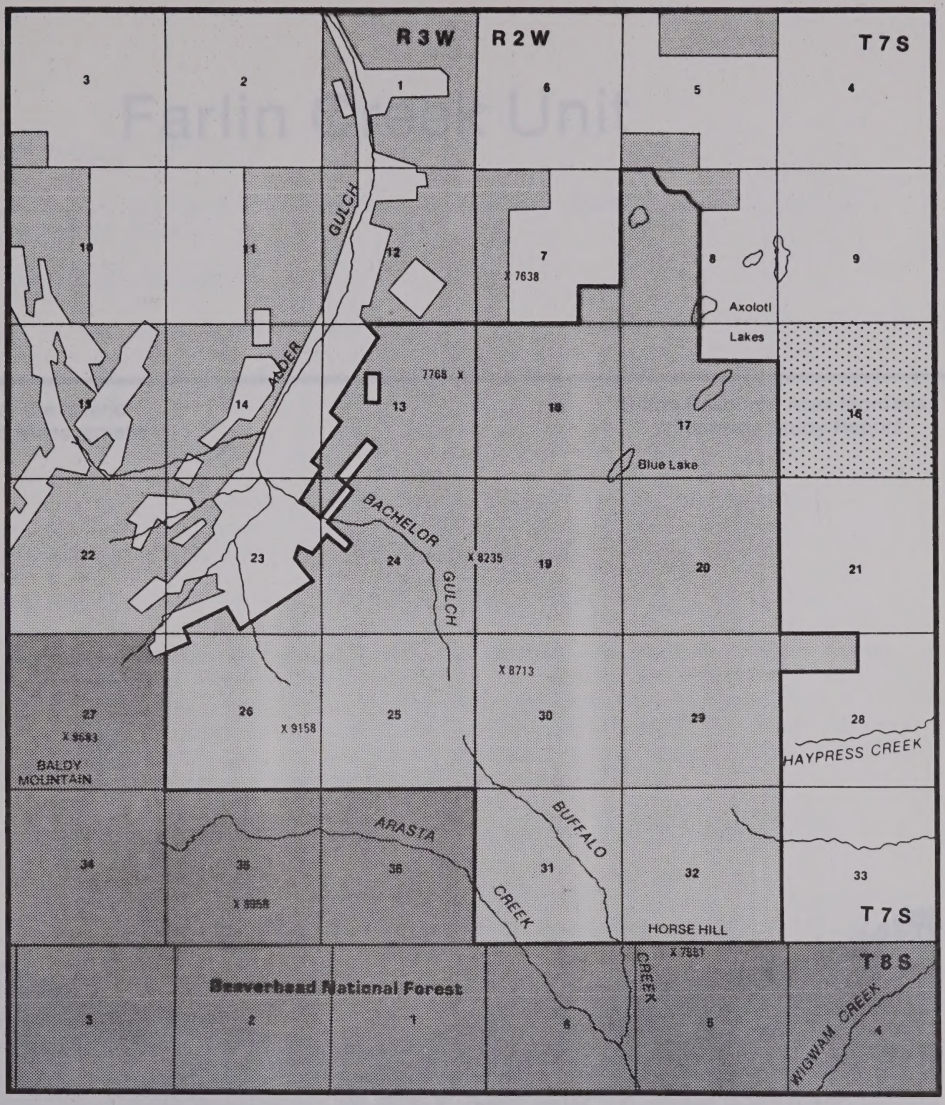
One respondent proposed a partial wilderness alternative that would include most of the WSA as wilderness. The three comments favoring ACEC designation believed the WSA should be managed to preserve wildlife, watershed, and nonmotorized recreation values.

A total of seventeen comments were received on Axolotl Lakes WSA, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	17	8	6	0	3	0

Comments Received from State and Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

Steven J. Durham, Environmental Protection Agency, supported long-term management to protect significant watershed values, including designation of Axolotl Lakes as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. No other comments were received from state and local governments or other government agencies that related to the Axolotl Lakes WSA.



WSA Boundary

BLM

WSA — Non-suitable

Forest Service

State

Private

AXOLOTL LAKES WSA
MT-076-069

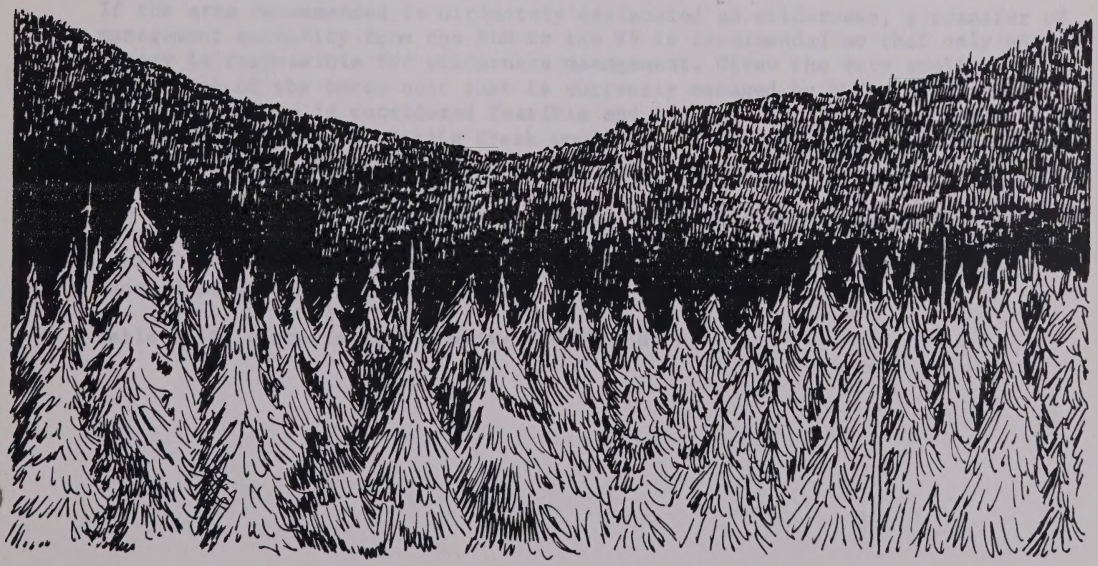
0 1 2 3 Miles

0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

Farlin Creek Unit

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



FARLIN CREEK

ACREAGE SUMMARY

Farlin Creek contains 1,139 acres and is being studied under authority of Section 202 of FLPMA.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

A total of 610 acres is recommended preliminary suitable for wilderness designation as a tack-on to the Forest Service's proposed East Pioneer Wilderness, and 529 acres are recommended as unsuitable for wilderness designation. The proposed BLM wilderness would add the following values to the adjacent portion of the FS unit: physiographic unity and protection of scenic values by including the timbered ridge extending west from Baldy Mountain and a less irregular and therefore more manageable boundary for this part of the larger wilderness area. The preferred alternative provides a logical wilderness access route to the Baldy Mountain area and some supplemental wildlife and recreation features.

Designating only part of the unit as wilderness would reduce potential conflicts with minerals and motorized access. It would also reduce much of the unit's habitat diversity and eliminate an area of big game winter range that would be given long-term protection if designated as wilderness. An area of high current mineral interest and mineral potential is proposed for nonwilderness. The most heavily traveled recreational vehicle routes, as well as the route to the Polaris claim group north of Farlin Creek, is also within the nonwilderness portion (see the Farlin Creek map).

A potential harvest of about 0.4 million board feet per decade would be forgone.

If the area recommended is ultimately designated as wilderness, a transfer of management authority from the BLM to the FS is recommended so that only one agency is responsible for wilderness management. Given the very small proportion of the total unit that is currently managed by BLM, transfer of the BLM holdings is considered feasible and logical. If the FS unit is not ultimately designated, Farlin Creek would not be a viable independent candidate for wilderness status.

The 610 acres of the 202 study area would be manageable as wilderness if it is added to the proposed East Pioneer Wilderness on adjacent national forest land. The study area's small size and easy access prevents it from being managed as wilderness on its own.

Table 18 is a statistical summary for this area.

TABLE 18

STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR FARLIN CREEK

Area	Acres BLM
Farlin Creek Unit	1,139
Gross Total 1,139 acres	
Recommendations	
BLM acres recommended nonsuitable	529
Gross Total 529 acres	
BLM acres preliminarily recommended suitable	610
Gross Total 610 acres	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

The Farlin Creek unit is 1,139 acres of BLM-managed land contiguous to the 93,859-acre East Pioneer proposed wilderness (FS RARE II area 1-008). It is about twenty-five miles west of Dillon, Montana, on the western slope of the east leg of the Pioneer Mountains. It is partially within the historic Elkhorn and Baldy mining districts.

Boundaries

The unit's boundaries are all on legal subdivisions, with national forest lands adjoining the unit on the east and forming part of the north and south boundaries. Private lands and BLM-managed lands form the rest of the unit boundary.

General Environmental

Steel Creek and Farlin Creek dissect the unit, flowing west about a mile apart on either side of a ridge more than 7,000 feet high. The two forks of Farlin Creek, the larger stream, head on Baldy Mountain, about three miles upstream on national forest land.

Vegetation on the ridge between the creeks and on north-facing slopes is predominantly timber. There are aspen stands and meadows along the creeks. Parts of the western edge of the unit and the area north of Farlin Creek are open, sagebrush-grassland types.

APPLICATION OF WILDERNESS PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Criterion No. 1 - Evaluation of Wilderness Values

Quality of the Area's Mandatory Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness. The imprints of man within the unit do not significantly affect the area's natural character.

However, there is a concentration of somewhat noticeable impacts along lower Farlin Creek, where a well-used vehicle way and nearby selective logging are a moderate impact.

Other imprints of man that are present are three short vehicle ways in the northern third of the unit and the remains of a mine and a vehicle way along Steel Creek. These imprints have a low impact.

Overall, the unit is substantially natural appearing except for an area along lower Farlin Creek.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The unit has outstanding opportunities for solitude due to the broken terrain and forest cover but does not have outstanding primitive recreation values.
Solitude. The forest cover in most of the unit and the well-dissected topography do provide excellent potential for seclusion, especially when the unit is considered as part of the larger roadless area. The two major drainages and several small tributaries offer good potential for dispersal of visitors.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. When considered with the FS unit, Farlin Creek does provide good opportunities for primitive recreation. Activities best suited to this unit are hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and hunting for elk, deer, and mountain grouse. As an access point or supplemental site, the unit contributes to other opportunities on national forest lands, such as climbing, nature study, and mountain goat hunting.

Special Features

This unit provides important spring-summer-fall habitat for mule deer, important spring and fall elk range, elk calving habitat, and some winter range for deer and elk.

Scenic values are moderate in this small unit; however, as a tack-on to the FS unit, the area adds to the diversity of the total area by including lower foothills and drainages--a supplemental scenic value. It also adds to the larger area a timbered ridge more than 7,000 feet high, which is part of the system of forested ridges extending downslope from Baldy Mountain.

Multiple Resource Benefits (Benefits To Other Multiple Resource Values Which Wilderness Designation Of The Area Would Ensure)

Wilderness designation would aid in the long-term maintenance of important mule deer and elk habitats including elk calving habitat and

some deer and elk winter range. Restricting vehicle use would also reduce stress on these species. Ecological diversity of the unit, which is important for wildlife, would be maintained. Designation would also protect native vegetation, scenic values, and soil and water resources by restricting disturbing activities.

Wilderness designation would benefit the opportunities for primitive recreation and would ensure that the area is managed to preserve the unit's outstanding scenic values.

Many of these benefits could occur through other administrative or legislative actions. Wilderness protection, however, ensures these benefits on a long-term basis, whereas other actions to protect natural values are uncertain and may be temporary or insufficient.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems and Land Forms. Farlin Creek contains two ecotypes: sagebrush steppe dominates the northern and western parts of the unit; Douglas-fir forest covers the rest. Neither ecosystem covers an area considered adequately large to serve as a representative type. Therefore, ecosystem representation is not a factor in determining the suitability of this area.

Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers. The Farlin Creek unit is within five hours driving time of one major population center--Great Falls. However, the designation of Farlin Creek would have no significant effect on the overall opportunities within one day's driving time of Great Falls, because Great Falls is near unusually rich wilderness opportunities. The opportunities within five hours of Great Falls are twelve designated wilderness areas, 4,122,934 acres; thirty-three presidentially endorsed areas, 2,669,180 acres; and thirty-five further study areas, 1,236,580 acres.

Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas. Designation of this area would not be nationally or regionally significant, but it would extend the opportunities for a longer season of wilderness use within the region and would somewhat expand the diversity of protected wildlands.

There are two existing and seven proposed wilderness areas in the two-county local area. The percentage of all land in the two-county area in designated wilderness is 1.8% and in proposed wilderness, 6.1%. Designation of this unit would not significantly affect these percentages.

Criterion No. 2 - Manageability

Farlin Creek is not manageable as wilderness on its own, but must be considered as a tack-on to the FS area. The National Forest boundary at

Farlin Creek is irregular, and the BLM unit fits into this boundary from the west for a width of about one-half to one mile. The body of this unit added to the larger area would result in a less irregular and presumably somewhat more manageable East Pioneer wilderness unit. A concentration of mining claims in the southwest part of the unit could impair effective management of the unit as wilderness if valid discoveries on any of the claims are proven.

Quality Standards

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Exploration of lands with high potential for silver, gold, and tungsten may be significantly impacted if the All Wilderness or the Partial Wilderness alternative is adopted.

Farlin Creek has good potential for silver, gold, and possibly of tungsten. Most of the past mining activity and most of the existing mining claims lie in the southern and western portions of the area. Development of these claims could be adversely affected by wilderness designation.

Impacts of Wilderness Designation on Other Resources

This subsection covers the extent to which other resources would be forgone or receive major adverse impacts as a result of wilderness designation.

Soils, Air, and Water. Wilderness designation of the entire study area or any part of it would cause no significant impacts on air quality, soil or water resources.

Recreation. Wilderness designation would adversely affect the small amount of current motorized recreation use chiefly associated with hunting.

Livestock Grazing. About half of one small custodial allotment, containing 75 AUMs, is within the unit boundary. There would be no significant impacts to improvements, stocking levels, or costs of operations.

Timber Management. Study area timber evaluations show a positive present net worth at a 4% discount rate and a slightly negative one at 7-3/8%. The potential sustained yield harvest in this unit is approximately 0.4 mmbf per decade, which would be forgone under wilderness designation.

Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

If Farlin Creek is not designated, the FS East Pioneer area would retain its original, somewhat irregular legal boundary. Mining activity would likely cause adverse impacts in the Steel Creek area, and the timbered ridge in the central part of the unit would probably be developed for timber management. This would result in impacts on wilderness characteristics, scenic values, and wildlife features.

Public Comments

This standard is covered under the section entitled Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments.

Local Social and Economic Effects

Economic benefits of development of gold, silver, and possibly tungsten could be forgone if the area were designated wilderness. A harvest of about 0.4 mmbf of timber per decade, and a maximum of one-quarter of a job per year in the lumber industry would be forgone. There is a sufficient supply of timber available locally to make up for the loss of this small volume.

Consistency with Other Plans

The Farlin Creek area is not specifically mentioned in any formally approved local, state, or federal plans. The Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, however, specifically mentions a policy to "discourage all wilderness areas in Beaverhead County." The basis of the Beaverhead County policy is the perceived effect of wilderness on the local economy--primarily the livestock, timber, and minerals sectors.

Although it is apparent that the BLM cannot completely resolve the inconsistency between this county's plan and the Agency's legal mandate and program policy to recommend suitable areas for wilderness, the study has incorporated an analysis of economic effects of wilderness designation and nondesignation. Local economic concerns have been a major factor in deriving recommendations in this study. The preferred alternative for this unit is still in conflict with the county's policy statement.

UNIT ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered, and Impacts

Three alternatives were considered for the Farlin Creek unit--All Wilderness (1,139 acres wilderness), No Wilderness (No Action), and Partial Wilderness (610 acres wilderness and 529 acres nonwilderness). Table 19 is a summary of potential impacts for each alternative.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The All Wilderness alternative is considered environmentally preferable.

Agency-Preferred Alternative

The Partial Wilderness Alternative is the preferred alternative. All feasible means to avoid environmental impacts have been adopted.

Table 19

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

FARLIN CREEK

Alternative	Wilderness Resource	Wilderness Manageability	Impact on Motorized Recreation	Impact on Nonmotorized Recreation	Impact on Scenic Values	Impact on Wildlife Habitat	Impact on Mineral Availability	Impact on Livestock Grazing Management	Impact on Timber Harvest Potential	Impact on Social & Economic Values
ALL WILDERNESS (1,139)	Provides wilderness protection for very small area adjacent to proposed wilderness on national forest. Predominant ecotypes are Douglas-fir and sagebrush steppe. High overall wilderness values with impacts on naturalness in lower portion.	Moderate potential for future manageability problems. Includes area with a concentration of mining claims.	Slight reduction in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 3 miles of vehicle ways.	Anticipated slight potential for impairment in quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation due to limited size of WSA.	Ensures long-term protection of existing moderate and outstanding scenic values on total unit.	Ensures long-term protection for important elk and deer habitat. Only minor potential for changes in numbers.	May have significant impact on availability for exploration of lands with high potential for silver, gold, and tungsten.	No significant impacts.	Short-term and long-term loss in harvest potential of 0.4 mmbf/decade with a marginal current economic return.	Reduced opportunity for income and jobs from mining and timber harvest. Reduced opportunity for mining would have the greatest effect.
NO WILDERNESS	Mining, timber harvest could impair wildlife, recreation, scenic features.	No impact.	No impact.	Slight negative effect on quantity and quality of nonmotorized recreation.	Potential degradation of existing scenic values over long term.	Some potential long-term adverse impacts on security cover. Only minor potential to decrease numbers.	No impact on mineral development and production.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact on social and economic situation.
PARTIAL WILDERNESS (610 acres) (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	Same as All Wilderness except removes lower portion with impacted naturalness.	Minor potential for future manageability problems.	Very slight reductions in motorized recreation due to discontinued availability of 1 mile of lightly traveled vehicle way.	Same as All Wilderness	Ensures long-term protection of most of the outstanding scenic values.	Ensures long-term protection for only 25% of elk winter range and for 80% of deer winter range compared to the All Wilderness alternative. Only minor potential for changes in numbers.	May have significant impact on availability for exploration of lands with high potential for silver, gold, and tungsten, which is located on the 610 acres recommended for wilderness.	No significant impacts.	Same impacts as All Wilderness	Same as All Wilderness.

Monitoring and Enforcement

If part of the area is designated wilderness as proposed, a Wilderness Management Plan will be prepared to protect natural values. If part of the unit is released from wilderness consideration as proposed, existing regulations and policies will guide management of the area to insure that unnecessary and undue degradation of natural values does not occur.

SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inventory Comments Deferred for Consideration Until the Wilderness Study

Intensive inventory comments deferred for consideration until the study phase involved mineral and timber potential and transfer of BLM management authority to the Forest Service. Several comments mentioned that the area was too small for wilderness consideration.

Comments Received on the Related Planning Effort

No comments were received on the Dillon MFP that related to Farlin Creek.

Comments Received on the Draft WPA/EIS

Public hearings were held in Montana in Dillon and Helena on June 22 and 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks Draft Wilderness Study and EIS. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study and Draft EIS, and sixty-five written communications were received in the record.

Twenty-six comments were received that specifically mentioned the Farlin Creek unit. Ten of these favored the preferred alternative, Partial Wilderness. These respondents believed it is appropriate to recommend the area as an addition to the Forest Service East Pioneer proposed wilderness.

Eleven respondents believed the area should be recommended for nonwilderness. Reasons given for this position were that areas smaller than 5,000 acres should not be studied and that the area should be available for mineral development. One respondent proposed a new boundary for the national forest area that would eliminate Farlin Creek as a contiguous unit.

Two comments favored wilderness designation for the entire area under study to include elk winter range not within the proposed wilderness boundary. Three comments expressed no clear opinion.

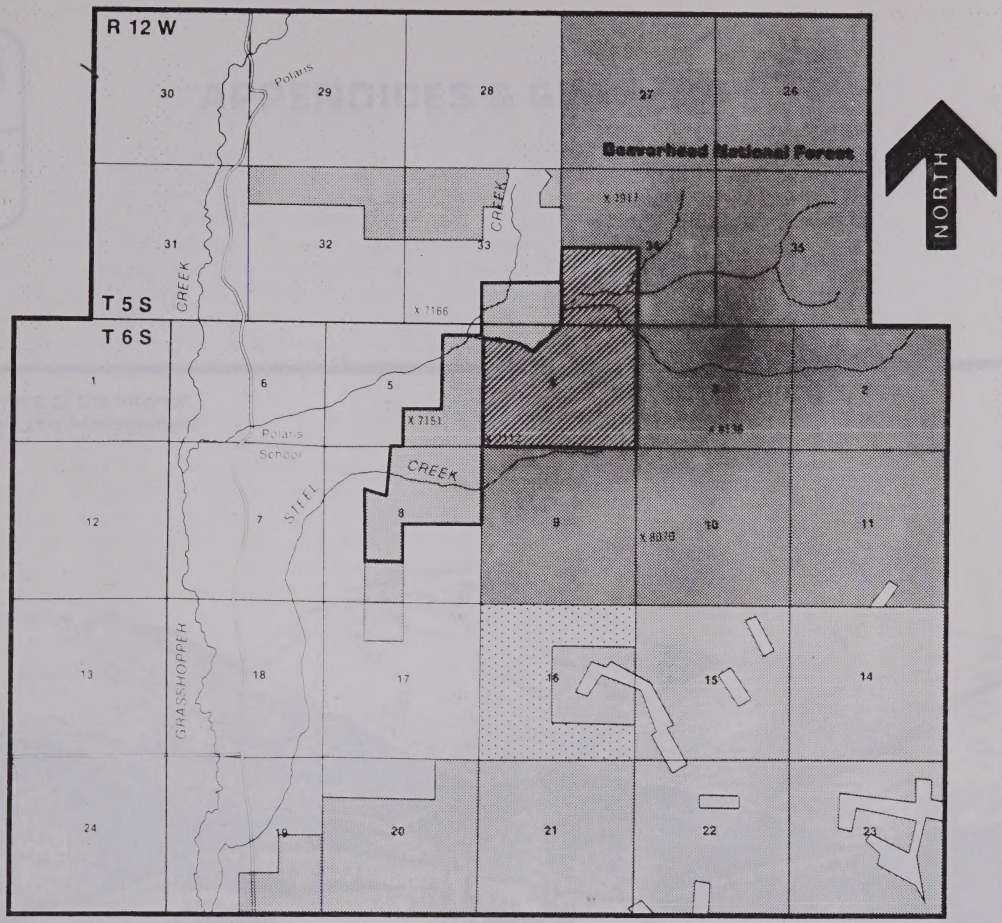
A total of twenty-six comments were received on Farlin Creek Study Area, as outlined below:

	Total received	Comments supporting more wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting DEIS preferred alternative	Comments supporting less wilderness than DEIS preferred alternative	Comments opposing wilderness designation	No clear opinion
No. of Comments	26	2	10	11	0	3

Comments from State and Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

Holly Smith, Beaverhead County Planning Board, stated that the Board "would not oppose" the Farlin Creek proposal.

No other comments were received from state and local governments or other government agencies that related specifically to Farlin Creek.



FARLIN CREEK Unit

Boundary	Forest Service	
BLM	State	Paved Road
Non-suitable	Private	
Preliminarily Suitable		

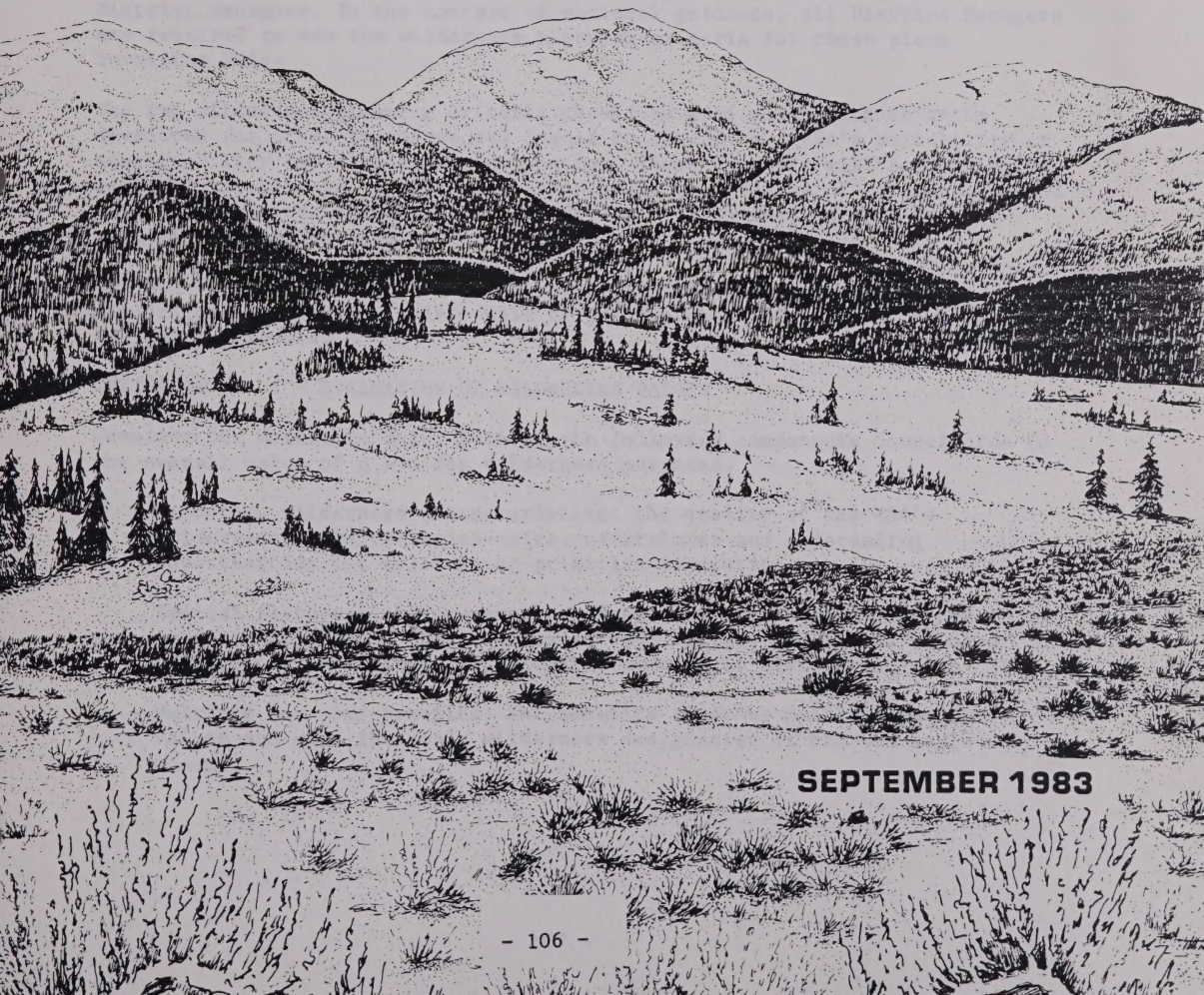
0 1 2 3 Miles

0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

APPENDICES & GLOSSARY

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



SEPTEMBER 1983

APPENDIX 1
PLANNING CRITERIA AND QUALITY STANDARDS

The primary goal of the BLM wilderness study process is to determine a WSA's suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness. The BLM will recommend for wilderness designation only those WSA's for which it has been determined, through the Bureau's multiple resource planning process and public involvement, that wilderness is the most appropriate use of the land and its resources. In addition, WSA's recommended as suitable for wilderness designation should possess wilderness values and multiple resource benefits capable of balancing the benefits of other resource values and uses which would be forgone due to wilderness designation.

The BLM planning regulations provide for the development of planning criteria by the District Manager to guide the development of a resource management plan, transition management framework plan (MFP), or MFP amendment and to provide parameters for analysis and decision making. Criteria are developed for each resource element which represents an issue in a planning effort. The planning regulations also provide for National and State Director guidance to District Managers. In the context of national guidance, all District Managers are required to use the wilderness planning criteria for those plans involving WSAs.

The two wilderness planning criteria should be used along with criteria developed for other resources and issues to determine a WSA's suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness designation. These criteria will be applied to each WSA through the BLM planning process and the results of this application will be considered and documented in determining whether an area is more suitabile for wilderness or for other uses.

All BLM wilderness recommendations--both "suitable for preservation as wilderness" and "nonsuitable"--will be justified on the basis of the following criteria.

CRITERION NO. 1 - EVALUATION OF WILDERNESS VALUES

Consider the extent to which each of the following components contributes to the overall value of a WSA for wilderness purposes.

Mandatory wilderness characteristics: the quality of the WSA's wilderness characteristics--size, naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

Special features: the presence or absence, and the quality of the optional wilderness characteristics--ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Multiple resource benefits: the benefits to other multiple resource values and uses that only wilderness designation of the WSA could ensure.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System: consider the extent to which wilderness designation of the WSA under study would contribute to expanding the diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System from the standpoint of each of the factors listed below:

Expanding the diversity of natural systems and features, as represented by ecosystems and landforms.

Assessing the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers.

Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas.

The analysis should consider--in separate categories--public and state lands designated as wilderness, areas officially recommended for wilderness, and other public and state lands under wilderness study. (The state lands referred to here are those involved in state government's wilderness programs.)

CRITERION NO. 2 - MANAGEABILITY

The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.

QUALITY STANDARDS

In addition to the two wilderness planning criteria, a set of quality standards for analysis and documentation has also been established for wilderness EISs or EAs and wilderness study reports. The information and analysis needed to meet these standards are normally generated through BLM planning efforts. Most of these standards are part of the general standards used for multiple use planning. The standards specify that certain information and analysis is related to making a wilderness recommendation and that it is to be consolidated into a common format for wilderness EISs and wilderness study reports. The information necessary to satisfy these standards will be generated through appropriate sections of the wilderness planning and EIS effort. The quality standards should be addressed individually for each WSA in the wilderness study report. The use of quality standards fosters consistency in documenting the rationale for wilderness recommendations and ensure that other resource considerations are being adequately addressed in wilderness EISs. The use of quality standards in wilderness study reports facilitates administrative review of BLM wilderness recommendations by providing consistency in the types of information and analysis presented in each wilderness study.

The following are the six quality standards for analysis and documentation that must be addressed:

Standard No. 1 - Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Recommendations as to an area's suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness designation will reflect a thorough consideration of any identified or potential energy and mineral resource values.

Standard No. 2 - Impacts on Other Resources

Consider the extent to which other resource values or uses of the area would be forgone or adversely affected as a result of wilderness designation.

Standard No. 3 - Impact of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values

Consider the alternative use of land under study if the area is not designated as wilderness and the extent to which the wilderness values of the area would be forgone or adversely affected as a result of this use.

Standard No. 4 - Public Comment

In determining whether an area is suitable or nonsuitable for wilderness designation, the BLM wilderness study process will consider comments received from interested and affected publics at all levels--local, state, regional, and national. Wilderness recommendations will not be based exclusively on a vote-counting majority rule system. The BLM will develop its recommendations by considering public comment in conjunction with its analysis of a wilderness study area's multiple resource, social, and economic values and uses.

Standard No. 5 - Local Social and Economic Effects

In determing whether an area is suitable or nonsuitable for wilderness designation, the BLM will give special attention to adverse or favorable social and economic effects that designation of the area would have on local areas as identified through the wilderness study process.

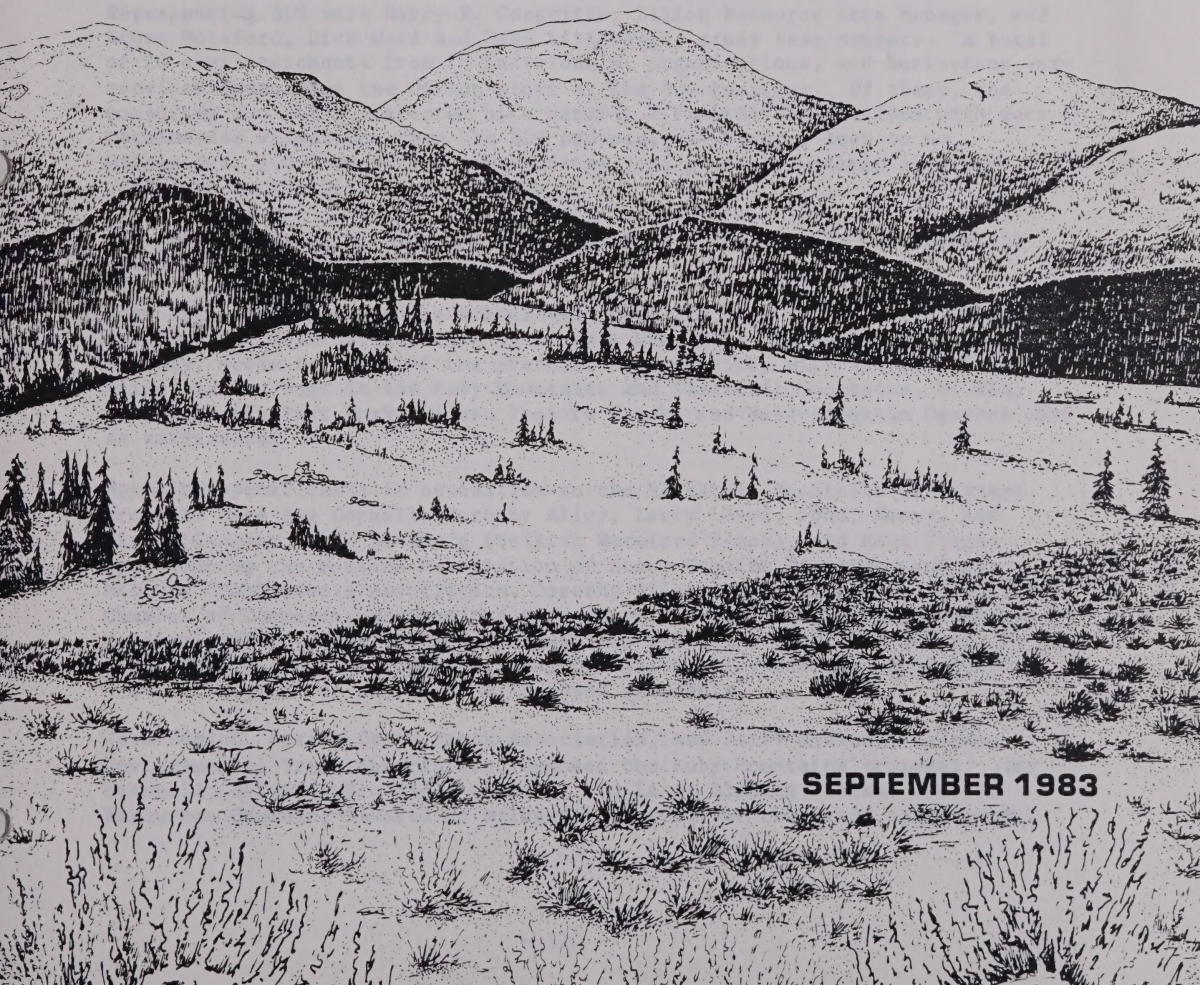
Standard No. 6 - Consistency with Other Plans

In determining whether an area is suitable or nonsuitable for wilderness designation, the BLM will consider and document the extent to which the recommendation is consistent with officially approved and adopted resource-related plans of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes (and the policies and programs contained in such plans), as required by FLPMA and the BLM planning regulations.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR WILDERNESS AMENDMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE DILLON RESOURCE AREA

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Resource Area Montana,
Wilderness Study Report



SEPTEMBER 1983

DILLON RESOURCE AREA

FOR THE

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

FOR WILDERNESS AMENDMENT/

OF PUBLIC HEARING

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC HEARING RECORD

A public hearing announcement was published in the Federal Register on May 5, 1982. Written notification of the hearings and information on the study were sent to Governor Ted Schwinden of Montana; U.S. Senators Max Baucus and John Melcher; U.S. Representatives Ron Marlenee and Pat Williams; 12 federal agencies and departments; 9 Montana state agencies; 4 local agencies and boards; 48 businesses and organizations; and numerous individuals, as well as numerous newspapers and radio and television stations.

Public hearings were held in Montana at Dillon and Helena on June 22 and June 24, 1982, respectively. The Helena hearing was a joint hearing for comments on both the Dillon and Missouri Breaks wilderness proposals. Nineteen individuals presented oral testimony concerning the Dillon study, and 65 written communications were received for the record.

1. Public Hearings

The hearing officer was Bud Lee of the Bureau of Land Management. Representing BLM were Harry R. Cosgriffe, Dillon Resource Area Manager, and Bruce Botsford, Dick Ward and Dean Littlepage, study team members. A total of 20 oral statements from 19 individuals, organizations, and businesses were received concerning the Dillon study at the two hearings. Of these, one supported the BLM's preferred alternative; 2 favored alternatives with more recommended wilderness than the BLM proposal; 14 favored less or no wilderness; and 2 supported nonwilderness, in general, without specific reference to the Dillon study areas.

Mike Mosolf spoke in favor of the preferred alternative for the Blacktail Mountains.

Hugh Zackheim supported the wilderness proposals, but also favored wilderness for the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA. Bill Cunningham, Wilderness Society, spoke in favor of the preferred alternative, with additional wilderness acreage in the Ruby Mountains and Blacktail Mountains. He also supported the East Fork, Hidden Pasture Creek, and Bell-Limekiln Canyons WSAs as wilderness.

Speaking specifically in opposition to the Blacktail Mountains wilderness proposal were Roy Cornell, Dorothy Alley, Larry Lloyd, John, Nancy, and Gladys Conover, K.F. Lundberg (Selkirk Hereford Ranch), and Mons Tiegen representing the Montana Association of State Grazing Districts and the Montana Stockgrowers Association. Dorothy Alley, representing the Beaverhead Chamber of Commerce, opposed the three partial wilderness alternatives due to grazing conflicts and possible air quality redesignation. John Ulrich, F. H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co., opposed the Blacktail wilderness proposal, but did "not object" to the other wilderness proposals.

Jack Lasich, Garden Creek Stock Association, and Peter Jackson, Western Environmental Trade Association, opposed the Ruby Mountains proposal. Jay Mitchell, Atlantic Richfield Company, and Larry Blasing, Inland Forest Resources Council, favored no wilderness for all of the lands under study.

Two individuals, Mike Rivenes and Robert Vandevere, favored nonwilderness management in general.

2. Communications from Elected Officials

Only one communication was received from an elected official. John Eliel, Beaverhead County Commissioner, opposed designating one section of state land as part of the Blacktail Mountains wilderness proposal.

3. Communications from State and Local Officials, Departments, and Agencies

Two written communications were received from state and local officials. Marcella Sherfy, Montana Historical Society, agreed that wilderness designation would be slightly more beneficial for cultural resources than would nonwilderness.

Holly Smith, Beaverhead County Planning Board, agreed with the nonwilderness proposals; stated that the Board "would not oppose" the Farlin Creek proposal; and said that wilderness designation for part of the Blacktail Mountains WSA would be "acceptable" only if private and state lands were acquired on a willing basis and if motor vehicle use by grazing permittees were allowed to continue.

4. Communications from Federal Officials, Departments, and Agencies

Six letters were received from federal agencies. Communications from the following three agencies stated that the BLM proposals had no effect on their programs: Bonneville Power Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and Army Corps of Engineers.

Three communications took no official position on the wilderness recommendations, but provided some substantive comments. Paul D. Garcia, U.S. Air Force, requested full consideration of the Air Force's need for military flight training routes in BLM planning and management. Richard A. Strait, National Park Service, supported wilderness additions, in general, as enhancing Park Service objectives. Steven J. Durham, Environmental Protection Agency, supported long-term management to protect significant watershed values, including designation of Axolotl Lakes and the East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek as areas of critical environmental concern.

5. Communications from Businesses and Organizations

Written comments were received from 23 businesses and organizations. Two were in general support of the BLM proposal. Seven opposed any wilderness; 7 proposed less wilderness than the BLM recommendation; 5 favored more wilderness; one supported wilderness for all the lands under study; and one favored wilderness in general.

Opposing any wilderness were Conoco, Inc., Champion International Corp., Minerals Exploration Coalition, Montana Public Lands Council, F. H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co., Montana Mining Association, and Inland Forest Resource Council, primarily due to mineral or timber potential, grazing conflicts, or low wilderness values.

Two individuals, Mike Stevens and Robert VanHoeve, favored consolidated management in general.

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3. Communications from State and Local Officials, Departments, and Agencies

Two written communications were received from state and local officials. Marcella Sherfy, Montana Historical Society, agreed that wilderness designation would be slightly more beneficial for cultural resources than would nonwilderness.

Sally Smith, Beaverhead County Planning Board, agreed with the nonwilderness proposals stated that the Board "would not oppose" the Farlin Creek proposal; and said that wilderness designation for part of the Blacktail Mountains RSA would be "acceptable" only if private and state lands were acquired or a utility route and 4 motor vehicle use by grazing permittees were allowed to continue.

4. Communications from Federal Officials, Departments, and Agencies

Six letters were received from federal agencies. Communications from the following three agencies stated that the BLM proposals had no effect on their programs: Bonneville Power Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and Army Corps of Engineers.

Three communications took no official position on the wilderness recommendations, but provided some substantive comments. Paul D. Garcia, U.S. Air Force, requested full consideration of the Air Force's need for military flight training routes in Big Hole Management. Richard A. Strait, National Park Service, requested wilderness additions, in general, to enhance Park Service objectives. Terry L. Davis, Environmental Protection Agency, supported long-term management to protect significant watershed values, including designation of Anglezt Lakes and the Deer Horn Blacktail Deer Creek as areas of critical environmental concern.

5. Communications from Businesses and Organizations

Written comments were received from 11 businesses and organizations. Two were in general support of the BLM proposal. Seven opposed any wilderness; 7 proposed less wilderness than the BLM recommendation; 3 favored more wilderness; one supported wilderness for all the lands under study; and one favored wilderness in general.

Opposing any wilderness were Conoco, Inc., Chevron International Corp., Minerals Exploration Coalition, Montana Public Lands Council, P. O. Bolles Land and Timber Co., Montana Mining Association, and Inland Forest Resource Council, primarily due to mineral or timber potential, grazing conflicts, or low wilderness values.

The Golden Ledge Exploration Co. favored nonwilderness for the Blacktail Mountains and Henneberry Ridge. The Garden Creek Stock Association and Pfizer, Inc. opposed designation of the Ruby Mountains. Elfreda Woodside, formerly of the Beaverhead County Museum, favored wilderness in general, but opposed wilderness in the Ruby and Blacktail ranges. The Montana Woolgrowers Association opposed the Blacktail Mountains proposal due to grazing conflicts. Noranda Exploration, Inc., favored nonwilderness for Farlin Creek and Blacktail Mountains due to mineral potential. Atlantic Richfield favored nonwilderness for the Ruby and Farlin areas for the same reason.

The Montana Wilderness Association and Defenders of Wildlife supported the BLM wilderness proposals and also preferred wilderness status for the East Fork, Hidden Pasture, and Bell-Limekiln WSAs. Defenders of Wildlife also favored additional wilderness acreage in the Ruby and Blacktail WSAs. The Montana Audubon Council favored wilderness for the East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek, in addition to supporting the BLM's wilderness proposals. The Madison-Gallatin Alliance supported the three proposed wilderness areas, plus wilderness protection for Axolotl Lakes, Henneberry Ridge, Hidden Pasture, and Bell-Limekiln. Beaverhead Forest Concerned Citizens favored the preferred alternative for Ruby and Blacktail, ACEC designation for Axolotl Lakes, and all wilderness for Farlin Creek and the East Fork. Earth First! supported wilderness for all the lands under study, while the Wildlands and Resources Association supported wilderness in general.

Bruce Dunn, Idaho Stud Mill, commented that the study results appear reasonable, but that lands allocated to nonwilderness should be available for a full range of uses. BN Timberlands, Inc., generally agreed with the proposal for the Ruby Mountains.

6. Communications from Citizens

A total of 30 written communications were received from citizens. Five supported the BLM proposal; 11 preferred a larger wilderness proposal or all wilderness; 11 preferred a smaller proposal; and 1 favored no wilderness. One letter supported wilderness in general, while one supported nonwilderness in general.

Eleven comments mentioned opposition to the Blacktail Mountains proposal due to effects on one grazing permittee.

Of those respondents favoring more wilderness, 4 favored more or all wilderness for the Blacktail and Ruby WSAs and 2 favored all wilderness for Farlin Creek. Eight preferred wilderness and 2 ACEC designation for the East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek. Two favored wilderness status for Hidden Pasture Creek, 5 preferred wilderness for Henneberry Ridge, and 6 supported Axolotl Lakes as wilderness.

7. Summary and Analysis

A total of 85 communications, either oral or in writing, were received on the BLM proposal. Due to multiple responses by some individuals, the actual

number of respondents was 74. Of these, 8 supported the preferred alternative, 18 favored alternatives of more or all wilderness, and 35 supported less or no wilderness. Three comments supported wilderness in general, 3 favored nonwilderness in general, and 7 expressed no clear opinion.

Those favoring the preferred alternative believed that the proposal was reasonable in that the areas of highest wilderness quality, with few resource conflicts, were being proposed as wilderness.

Those supporting a larger wilderness proposal believed that wilderness would protect important wildlife habitat not included in the BLM wilderness proposal; that too little land was still under consideration for wilderness; that there is a need for more wilderness diversity, including grassland types; and that the study placed too much negative emphasis on manageability, configuration of the study areas, and conflicts with motorized recreation, grazing, and mineral development.

Those favoring less wilderness believed that there is too much designated wilderness; that the areas under consideration are not outstanding; that the areas are too small and cannot be managed as wilderness; and that there are significant conflicts with grazing uses, timber harvest, and development of areas of mineral potential. Several respondents expressed the belief that grazing and wilderness are not compatible.

Other points made by several respondents were that legal public access is needed to these BLM areas; that alternative forms of protection such as areas of critical environmental concern should be considered; that areas of less than 5,000 acres should not be studied; and that three of the study areas - East Fork, Hidden Pasture and Bell-Limekiln - need to be studied in conjunction with adjacent national forest lands.

Of the areas recommended for wilderness, the Blacktail Mountains received the most comments in opposition, as well as the largest number of total comments. Of areas recommended for nonwilderness, the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek received the most comments in favor of wilderness designation.

New alternatives were proposed for the Ruby Mountains, Blacktail Mountains, East Fork, Hidden Pasture Creek, and Axolotl Lakes study areas.
Public comments resulted in a 400 acre reduction in the wilderness proposal for the Blacktail Mountains.

GLOSSARY

1. ACRONYMS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AMP	Allotment Management Plan
APD	Application for a Permit to Drill
AUM	Animal Unit Month
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
FS	Forest Service
MMBF	Million Board Feet
ORV	Off-Road Vehicle
RARE II	The second Forest Service Roadless Area Review and Evaluation
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

2. DEFINITIONS

ANIMAL UNIT MONTH (AUM): The amount of forage necessary for the sustenance of one cow or its equivalent for a period of one month.

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (AMP): A documented program which applies to livestock operations on the public lands, prepared in consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the permittees, lessees, or other affected parties.

APPLICATION FOR A PERMIT TO DRILL (APD): The federal permitting procedure required prior to road construction or drilling an exploratory well on a federal lease.

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC): Areas within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect life and safety from natural hazards or to prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; or other natural systems or processes.

CHERRYSTEM: A boundary configuration in which the boundary of a wilderness study area or proposed wilderness is drawn around a dead-end road or other linear feature so as to exclude that road or feature from the wilderness study area or proposed wilderness.

CHERRYSTEM ROAD: A dead-end road excluded from wilderness study by means of a cherrystem.

DISCOUNT RATE: An interest rate used in the analysis of the present net worth of timber, when portions of the timber being evaluated will not be harvested until some time in the future. In general, a lower discount rate results in a higher present net worth and makes it more likely that a stand will be harvested now. Two interest rates have been used in this study: 4%, which is the rate generally used by the Forest Service, and 7 3/8%, the rate used in the analysis of federal water projects. The choice of the interest rate for timber is a management decision.

DISCOVERY: A term used in connection with mining claims. As stated in a legal ruling which has been upheld in many later decisions, it is "where minerals have been found and the evidence is of such a character that a person of ordinary prudence would be justified in the further expenditure of his labor and means, with a reasonable prospect of success, in developing a valuable mine. . ."

ECOSYSTEM: A complex self-sustaining natural system which includes living and nonliving components of the environment and the interactions that bind them together. Its functioning involves the circulation of matter and energy between organisms and their environment.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS UNIT: An area served by a road network with a single entry point, used in the analysis of timber harvest potential.

FLPMA: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579, 90 Stat. 2743, 43 USC 1701).

FORAGE: All browse and herbaceous foods that are available to grazing animals. It may be grazed or harvested for feeding.

HABITAT: All elements of an organism's environment that is needed to complete its life cycle through reproduction. It includes but is not limited to food, cover, water, and living space in the amounts, qualities, and locations which the organism requires to complete its life cycle.

IMPACT: The effect, influence, alteration, or imprint of an activity.

IMPAIR: To diminish in value or excellence.

INTENSIVE INVENTORY: The step in the BLM's wilderness review process in which individual units appearing to have wilderness potential are evaluated to determine whether they have the roadless and wilderness characteristics required for Wilderness Study Area identification. Evaluation of nonwilderness values, such as mineral and timber potential, is deferred to the study phase, which follows the intensive inventory.

LEASABLE MINERALS: Those minerals subject to lease by the Federal Government. Includes oil and gas, coal, geothermal, phosphate, sodium, potash, and oil shale.

LOCATABLE MINERALS: Minerals subject to disposal and development through the Mining Law of 1872 (as amended). Generally includes metallic minerals, such as gold and silver, and other materials not subject to lease or sale.

MILLION BOARD FEET (MMBF): A measure of timber volume.

MOTOR VEHICLE: Any vehicle which is self-propelled or any vehicle which is propelled by electric power obtained from batteries.

NATURALNESS: Refers to an area which "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable." (From Section 2(c), Wilderness Act.)

NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY: A stipulation attached to mineral leases in sensitive areas that require use of methods of exploration and development not involving activity on the surface of the lease area, e.g., directional drilling from a point outside the lease area.

NONSUITABLE FOR PRESERVATION AS WILDERNESS: Refers to a recommendation in which certain federal lands satisfy the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act but have been found not to be appropriate for designation as wilderness on the basis of an analysis of the existing and potential uses of the land.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV): Any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other terrain.

OUTSTANDING: 1. standing out among others of its kind; conspicuous; prominent. 2. superior to others of its kind; distinguished; excellent.

OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA: An area of unusual natural characteristics where management of recreation activities is necessary to preserve those characteristics.

PATENTED MINING CLAIM: A claim on which title has passed from the Federal Government to the mining claimant under the mining laws.

PLANNING AMENDMENT: An amendment to an approved land use plan. It is initiated by the need to consider monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, a change in circumstances, or an applicant's proposed action that may result in a significant change in a portion of the approved plan.

PLANNING CRITERIA: The factors used to guide development of the resource management plan or revision to ensure that it is tailored to the issues previously identified and to ensure that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are developed to guide the collection and use of inventory data and information, the analysis of the management situation, the design and formulation of alternatives, the estimation of the effects of alternatives, the evaluation of alternatives, and the selection of the preferred alternative.

PRE-FLPMA: On or before October 21, 1976, the date of passage of FLPMA.

PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION: Refers to a wilderness recommendation at any stage prior to the time when the Secretary of the Interior reports his

recommendation to the President. Until the Secretary acts, the recommendation is "preliminary" because it is subject to change during administrative review.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION: Nonmotorized and nondeveloped types of outdoor recreational activities.

PUBLIC LANDS: Any land and interest in land owned by the United States and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management, without regard to how the United States acquired ownership, except (1) lands located on the Outer Continental Shelf and (2) lands held for the benefit of Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos.

RANGE IMPROVEMENT: Any activity on or relating to rangelands designed to improve production of forage, change vegetation composition, control pattern of use, provide water, stablize soil and water conditions, and enhance habitat for livestock, fish, wildlife, and wild horses and burros.

RESOURCE AREA: A geographic portion of a BLM district, under supervision of an area manager.

RIPARIAN: Situated on or pertaining to the bank of a river, stream, or other body of water. Normally used to refer to plants of all types that grow along streams or around springs.

ROAD: A vehicle route which has been improved and maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use.

ROADLESS: For the purpose of the wilderness review program, this refers to the absence of roads that have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.

Words and phrases used in the above definition of "roadless" are defined as follows:

1. Improved and maintained: Actions taken physically by man to keep the road open to vehicular traffic. "Improved" does not necessarily mean formal construction. "Maintained" does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.

2. Mechanical means: Use of hand or power machinery or tools.

3. Relatively regular and continuous use: Vehicular use which has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples are: access roads for equipment to maintain a stockwater tank or other established water sources, access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities, or access roads to mining claims.

SECURITY COVER: The vegetative and topographic complex capable of essentially hiding an animal from view.

SOLITUDE: 1. The state of being alone or remote from habitations; isolation. 2. A lonely, unfrequented, or secluded place.

SPECIAL FEATURES (Supplemental Values): Features that may be present in an area under consideration for wilderness, such as ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. They are not required for wilderness designation, but their presence will enhance an area's wilderness quality.

SUITABLE FOR PRESERVATION AS WILDERNESS: Refers to a recommendation that certain federal lands satisfy the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act and have been found appropriate for designation as wilderness on the basis of an analysis of the existing and potential uses of the land.

VALID MINING CLAIM: A mining claim on which a discovery has been made. (See "discovery.")

VEHICLE WAY: A vehicle route which has not been improved and maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use.

WILDERNESS AREA: An area formally designated by Act of Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS: Key characteristics of a wilderness listed in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and used by BLM in its wilderness inventory. These characteristics include size, naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, outstanding opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation, and supplemental values.

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT: The management of lands which have been designated by Act of Congress as wilderness areas.

WILDERNESS PROTECTION STIPULATION: A stipulation to protect wilderness values attached to oil and gas leases issued after the passage of FLPMA.

WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS: Recommendations by the Bureau of Land Management, the Secretary of the Interior, or the President, with respect to an area's suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness.

WILDERNESS REPORTING: The process of preparing the reports containing wilderness recommendations on wilderness study areas and transmitting those reports to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress.

WILDERNESS REVIEW: The term used to cover the entire wilderness inventory, study, and reporting phases of the wilderness program of the Bureau of Land Management.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREA: A roadless area or island that has been inventoried and found to have wilderness characteristics as described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891).

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